THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

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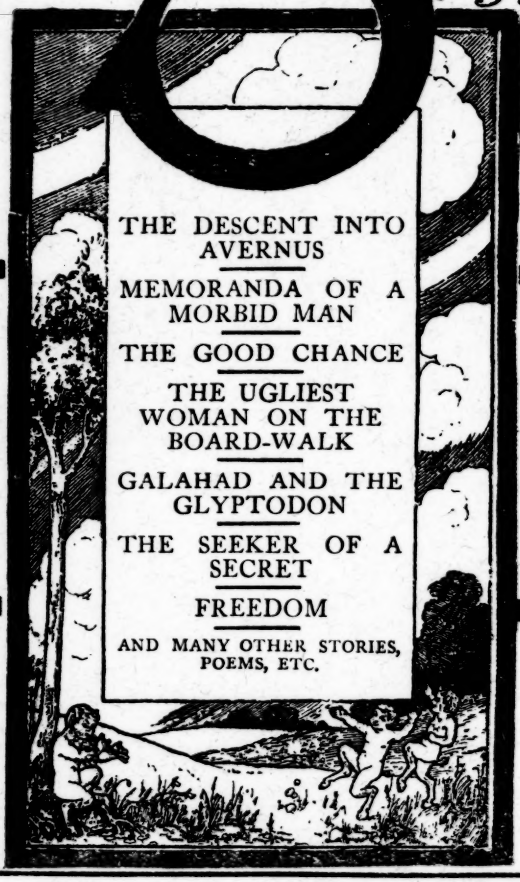

THE DESCENT INTO AVERNUS

MEMORANDA OF A MORBID MAN

THE GOOD CHANCE

THE UGLIEST WOMAN ON THE BOARD-WALK

GALAHAD AND THE GLYPTODON

THE SEEKER OF A SECRET

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A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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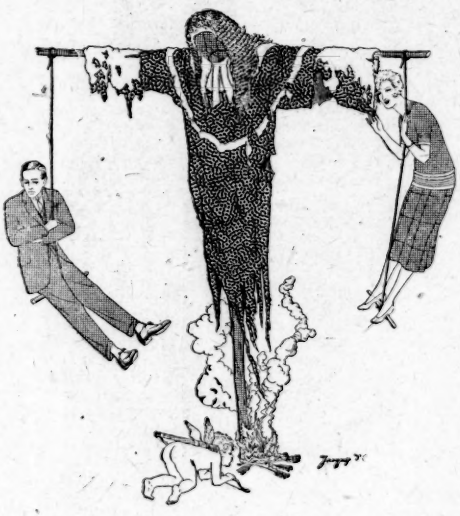
BELIEF AND THE FIG-LEAF

By H. DENNIS BRADLEY.



DEHUMENIZED

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IT is very sad that all the beautiful myths of our youth should be gradually dispelled. But it is a materialistic and mythoclastic age.

My intelligence cynically suggests that my ancient ancestors probably swung by their tails, whilst many of their descendants to-day should swing for theirs. Yet my sense of beauty, of romance, of love, of vanity, and of pride, cries aloud for the poetic origin of all things in a wonderful garden of flowers.

There is no romance in the ape; it merely exhibits a crude truth, with all of truth's nasty indelicacies. But the Garden of Eden has a poetic suggestion, even if it is a beautiful white lie.

And so I must play in my garden.

Perhaps, when the sun first shone on the Garden of Eden, and the first pair of irresponsibles jazzed to the soft music of the serpent's lute—it was thoughtful of him to provide the music: give him his due—the climate was so perfect that even the donning of a fig-leaf was the merest concession to the dawning of modesty.

It was only when man developed from his divine simplicity that the atmosphere changed, and in self-defence, though always primitive, he was compelled to adopt clothes as a protection against the varied elements.

And woman, who even in the origin was never simple, decked herself throughout the ages, until to-day her clothes are again almost original. And the primitive man loves the origin of woman, as the modern primitive woman loves the original man.

But when the mind is artistic, and the sun shines, or the central heating radiates, it is doubtful whether clothes are really necessary. And if they are—though the fashions of the diaphanous modern Eve are as slight as the doubt—there is no reason why they should not be alluring.

* * * * *

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Vol. LXII NOVEMBER, 1920 No. 3

THE DESCENT INTO AVERNUS

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

CHAPTER I

IN the motor, on the way to Pauline Welsh's gaudily celebrated Long Island estate, Peter Crane did his best to appear of a commendable seriousness. After all, since Seymour had put him on his honour to behave with discretion, it would be rather a breach of faith to take the expedition as a rip-roaring lark and nothing more. Crane, as he lounged beside his cousin, went over in his mind last night's exhortations.

"I have the greatest respect for Pauline," Seymour had said. "You Cranes are malignant snobs; the poor girl would make succulent prey, of course. Well, I don't intend that she *shall*. You've got to promise you'll take her as a charming little thing and find excuses for her faults and crudities; otherwise I shall go alone."

Crane had promised; and, this morning, he honestly meant to stick to his vow. The demon of irony betrayed him, however, the moment they had swung past the ornate gate-house and under the towering entrance-arch of marble and bronze.

"I feel faint," Crane moaned, "and miserably nervous. How *does* one greet a tin-plate princess?"

He didn't wait for an answer; at that moment, far away above the massed verdure he had perceived a high gold dome that the sun smote to a barbaric radiance.

"Oh, my God!" He put a hand to his eyes. "Does she live under that in summer? Doesn't it ever melt and come trickling down all over one in big, oily, scalding drops? Or is it made of some indestructible sort of super-tin?"

Seymour couldn't help laughing.

"Be quiet, you swine!" he protested.

They swept around a bend of the drive and the dome sank out of sight.

"The approach *is* charming," Crane confessed. "The landscape gardener didn't prostitute his talents like one John Seymour."

Seymour shrugged.

"Well, maybe the house deserves all your sneers," he said. "You must give me a belly-full of them. As the archi-

tect, *I* deserve them, I suppose, for deliberately designing the damned thing, and for helping to cram its maw with tapestries by the ton and bric-à-brac by the van-load and French furniture enough to fill an ocean liner. Oh," he could wax extravagant at the vision, "it's a ghastly place, a rose-and-gilt what-is-it, a bog of upholstered muck. Crucify me for it, Peter, for heaven's sake; don't waste your sympathy on *me!* But I do ask you to study Pauline, to give her a fair show; the way she has of making one admire her in the midst of all the tawdry truck she dotes on is miraculous. She's a wonderful creature, there's no denying it. If you don't grow to respect her, it will prove to me that you *are* an idiot. Remember my warning: I don't intend to show her off for you like a circus-freak or an animal in a zoo."

The broad roadway resembled a tunnel cut through a stretch of forest. On either side great trees reared their trunks with an effect majestically architectural, elaborately ordered. The park was a brilliant achievement, with its straight, gigantic columns and dim cathedral aisles. No limbs, sagging to the ground under a weight of foliage, confused the prospect.

The charm of space was everywhere preserved. Each trunk was like a monolith. The branches began high up and formed a rich, dense roof overhead. The greensward, dappled with yellow motes, invited to a meditative stroll. The light was a liquid, cloistral dusk suffused with gold. At intervals, clearings planted with flowering shrubs made patches of sheer, quivering brilliance.

"Of course it's expensively manicured," said Crane, "but it's beautiful."

Seymour sighed. "Yes, it is. The poor girl wanted a stupendous contrast, don't you see? Her idea was to get the eyes used to twilight and then—biff!—to flash on an insufferable light. Ingenious, you must grant!"

At one point, the drive swept steeply up a short, precipitous rise. A grotesque edifice capped the spot. Broad marble steps led from the roadway to the building itself. This was a ruinous Roman temple or pavilion, circular in shape, with the inevitable worm-eaten columns propping the heavy roof and with a wide balustrade to add a spurious touch. Owing to the position of the structure—it hung on the verge of an ugly abyss—the effect was one of conspicuous grandeur. At one spot, where the rock had been cut away beneath it, there was a straight, dizzying drop to the water that fretted and murmured at the base of the cliff.

Suddenly the motor rounded the top of a small eminence and without warning the park ended. They hung now at the rim of an immense cup-like depression in the land. Directly facing them, at the opposite edge of the amphitheatre, was Pauline's celebrated house; between were vast formal gardens.

Crane emitted a low whistle.

"Biff!—and yet once more, biff!" he exclaimed. "How it blares; how it trumpets—like a million brazen elephants!"

He paused.

"Do you know, the audacity of the thing is positively thrilling," he gasped out.

It was all a dazzling blur, a chaos of dewy beauties and ugly blots. The rank profusion of colour, the immensity of the flower-beds, the disordered array of marbles—fountains, benches, urns, groups of statuary—and the masses of tortured boxwood dizzied and well-nigh stunned the observer.

There was no relief anywhere one looked, except for one break in the hill through which a stretch of serene blue water was visible. The extravagant confusion quite robbed the genuinely lovely spaces of their charm. The eye would rest for a moment on delicate clouds of bloom as fragile, as exquisite as an arabesque, only to be diverted in a flash by the tiered terraces, with their glistening flights of steps and their piles of sculpture. The air was filled with the sparkle and shimmer of fountains; but even this lavish drenching of

spray was ineffectual. It could not take from the spot its effect of throbbing, noontide heat and ferment.

The house itself loomed above the gardens and added the last prodigious note. It was a structure of magnificent boldness, a pile of pure white marble with an immense golden dome. Fanciful, slender minarets, by the dozen, it seemed, soared up from the roof; the edifice fairly bristled with them. The whole huge place was miraculously carved until it resembled more a fantastic piece of lace-work than a thing of stone. It was capricious, outlandish, and, as it flamed and glittered under the sun's rays, a torture to the eyes.

Crane winced, after his amazed survey, and blinked furiously.

"My eyelids are seered away and I hear tom-toms thumping," he intoned, as they drew up before the great bronze door. "Pauline will find Jerusalem the Golden pretty anæmic when she gets there!"

She was waiting for them in one of the cluttered drawing-rooms. The two men hesitated for a moment on the threshold, as if timorous of launching themselves into the sea of furniture that separated them from their hostess. Pauline looked diminutive, almost pathetic, as she stood under the crystal chandelier, with serried ranks of heroic couches and chairs of gigantic proportions shutting her off from them. She smiled cordially, held out a hand and waited for them to thread a furtive way to her.

Seymour ventured first, with Crane a few paces behind; theirs was a quaint progress—as if they were plunging through a morass, the younger man careful all the while to keep his shoes dry by stepping gingerly on the precise spots where his more experienced companion had planted his feet.

Pauline apparently did not go in for polite preludes to the actual business on hand; her first words to Crane were, "You like it?" spoken in a way to discourage subterfuge. She levelled upon him a frank, searching glance.

Crane was a match for her.

"It's marvellous—but so terrifying," he returned. "I feel that, if I once went under, I might never rise to the surface again. Catacombs are as nothing to your splendid intricacies."

Seymour, over Pauline's shoulder, elevated his brows warningly at his incorrigible cousin and shook a disapproving head. The silent precaution was quite unnecessary. The girl laughed out her delight. She had looked deep into Crane's candid eyes and had in a flash found herself believing in him.

"He *does* like it; he agrees with me!" She confronted Seymour triumphantly. "We're two against one."

The unfortunate architect, receiving at that moment a sly wink from Crane, stammered out a clumsy pleasantry and reflected silently that he wished he'd come alone.

Pauline turned to Crane.

"Of course you know Mr. Seymour's views. He's ashamed of himself for helping me do it. He's been telling you all the way from New York how crude and ugly the place is. That makes your liking it much jollier, doesn't it?" She laid a hand on the young man's arm. "It's my *life*," and she seemed to embrace the whole estate, to carry it to her maternal breast with her large gesture. "Can't we—you and I—win him to our way of thinking? Can't we persuade him? He's been very kind and thoughtful; no one else could have seen my ideas through so perfectly. And it hurts me to realize that he hates his handiwork, indeed it does. So you'll help me? We'll back each other up; perhaps we'll convince him!"

"My dear Pauline," Seymour protested, "I adore it. It's your baby—and a bouncing one—and I'm its godfather. Haven't I the right, loving it so, to admit I don't think it's beautiful?"

Pauline appealed to Crane. "If he really loved it, he would be blind to its faults, wouldn't he?"

"Ah, yes," Crane nodded. "If it had freckles or bowlegs he'd never notice 'em."

"Before luncheon I want to take you all over," Pauline told him. "I suppose I'm a fearful bore about it. I can't help that; and if I tire you out this time you won't come again. People never seem to mind hurting my feelings. Lots of them visit me once and look the ground over and then don't appear any more. Why should they? They just want to get a chance to make fun of me. Oh, I notice it in a minute. Would you believe a girl like me could be so dreadfully neglected? Too much money and too few friends!"

She broke off of a sudden and smiled at Seymour.

"Ah, but Mr. Seymour is so different from the others," she resumed. "He is frank with me—he tells me just what he thinks of my house and of me—but he's fond of me, don't you see, and that makes everything all right."

Once more she rested a hand on Crane's sleeve.

"I suspect you're like him, Mr. Crane," she announced. "If I get on your nerves, if you find you can't *stand* me, you'll promise to tell me? I should honestly prefer that to your just clearing out in a polite way and then failing to show up again. It's the gradual realization of somebody's desertion that I hate."

His only reply was his sweetest and most disarming smile.

Seymour had been watching the two narrowly. It had taken him but a few moments to perceive that the girl was charmed by Crane. She seemed reluctant to take her eyes from his face; throughout her eager harangue she had examined him with a nervous intensity, as if she were determined to test him and prove, for her satisfaction, whether or not a suggestion of subtle mockery marred his cordiality.

Pauline had long since been forced by her position to measure each newcomer as a possible opponent—of that Seymour was aware. She stood for ever on her guard against covert jeers. All her life she had been exploited as the grotesquely, fabulously wealthy daughter of a man whose ignorance and vices and financial genius had been of so rich a strain as to leave a slimy trail over even his offspring.

Pauline faced the world alone and knew its hostility. Trained as she had been to an acceptance of jibes and bitter sneers, she yet could feel a despairing ache of sorrow and loneliness at the knowledge that there was nobody she could talk to of her father's redeeming tenderness for her or of her mother's tragic weakness.

Pauline had not seen her mother for ten years now; that fact was public property. Everything, indeed, in Mrs. Welsh's career of itinerant splendour was shared by her with the entire universe, from her newest frocks to her alcoholic cures. Seymour felt the deepest pity for Pauline as, making her direct appeal to Crane, she searched his face with a bewildered joy in the dawning conviction that at last she had met a man whom she could trust.

Without understanding why, the older man found himself scrutinizing his cousin's face with a stir of discouraged suspicion, with a keen pang of fear that he had never before known. At that moment the thought of Crane's easy-going weakness caused him a shiver of foreboding.

Peter stood there and submitted to the double examination without being in the slightest degree conscious of how intense a problem he offered for his companion's solution. Pauline was but too obviously stirred even now to a vivid response.

Seymour shut his eyes abruptly and, turning on his heel, pretended to look through a window at the gorgeous gardens. He had never been more miserable, more perplexed; the fact that his quick distrust amounted to an absurd, illogical disloyalty to the man he was fondest of didn't help him to throw off his depression.

"But you're both hot and dusty!" Pauline cut her revelations short and became on the instant the apologetic hostess. "You want to go to your rooms, of course. You're too polite!" She laughed. "I've given you connect-

ing suites, so you can run in on each other and gossip about me."

"My poor cousin won't have a moment's rest," Crane remarked. "I'm the sort that makes informal visits at dawn, with a supply of cigarettes and a great fund of sprightly talk."

Seymour faced about. "He sleeps like the dead; nothing would ever tempt him to leave his warm bed. I shan't once be disturbed."

The veer to casual small talk had restored his equanimity. He could curse himself for a fool now at the recollection of the dismal interpretations he had put upon this first meeting between Crane and the notorious heiress.

"Please don't let yourselves be inveigled into the lift," Pauline called after them. "Go up the staircase; it gives you a bird's-eye view that I'm dreadfully proud of."

CHAPTER II

For Crane, the visit proved of absorbing interest. It was strange, Pauline's power to dominate the scene, to occupy the centre of the vast, heterogeneous stage. No matter how appallingly splendid, how crammed and choked with furniture the rooms might be that she occupied with her guests, she imparted somehow a unity to the welter. When the two men were alone they resembled a pair of frightened castaways on a raft, with little hope of rescue from the turbulent sea.

Pauline's appearance on the threshold seemed to change everything; it was almost as if she could smooth the waves and bring about a new reign of order. She could simplify, even though she couldn't, by her presence, convert the colour-schemes to a semblance of beauty or impart a pardonable excuse for the mixture of styles and periods. Her mastery over the disordered universe made manifest the fact that she, by her genius, had created it; that, in itself, was enough to evoke admiration. Perverse, tasteless as her establishment was, it yet bore witness to the vast scope and boldness of her vision. Pauline's imagination was indeed a thing of monstrous infelicities; but of its rank fertility there could be no doubt.

She had no notion of the selective instinct, no conception of artistic pruning. For her a chill, pure vista would have been quite meaningless. Perfection, in her eyes, meant a filling to the brim, a flowing over of a great receptacle with the colourful and the sumptuous. She had built a vast house and she had glutted it; therefore she loved it. Her standards were her own; and they were superbly definite. She knew and cherished every one of her myriad possessions. Each thing had its hallowed spot; no protestations would ever prevail on her to move an object a single inch.

It was only natural, therefore, that she should appear always on the crest of the gigantic wave, that she should exercise a sort of divine authority. For her, the apparent chaos was an eternal order of her own compassing. It was her setting; it would have been other women's annihilation.

"You know," Crane confessed to Seymour, "it's all simply astounding. Fancy the queer little thing carrying though such a project! You've got to go back to ancient times to find the pat comparison; by jove, it suggests Dido building Carthage, damned if it doesn't! The impudence, the cheek of it! Nine girls out of ten would have captured their architects and decorators and told them to go right ahead. The result would have been beautiful, of course; but the poor dear owner would have drifted around in the most helpless, homeless daze imaginable. You know how it is with the unfortunate creatures. They're miserable, because they've been planted in alien soil. They can't find their way, they feel like intruders, and it's no consolation to realize they've achieved something rare when they couldn't for the life of them tell you *why*. But Pauline's control of things is stunning! You must have been like wax in her hands, John."

"Like wax," Seymour echoed. "Very clever, that about Dido. I only hope she'll never come a cropper against some handsome young Æneas."

Crane soon found himself regarding Pauline with a genuine enthusiasm. He had expected to find in the three days' sojourn more a gold-mine for future anecdotal needs than a present pleasure. A trip of inspection, it had promised to be, with the estate itself the main issue and the hostess merely a lay-figure lost in the confused labyrinth.

The early perception of how the diminutive Pauline dwarfed her surroundings put him quite off the track for a time. He hadn't reckoned on this; once he got to work on the new vein, however, he was immensely struck by its possibilities. Pauline herself was the principal study; her house came in for its share, to be sure, but only by reason of the light it cast on the figure of its mistress. His liking Pauline from the start complicated matters; it would have been much more satisfying to formulate lampoons against somebody one detested.

The girl's beauty had at once stirred Crane's blood to a vaguely stinging warmth. The enervating spring months in town had left him jaded. It was Pauline's part to awaken him to a vigorous activity. He no longer felt lazy and out of sorts. The old sense of physical well-being had quickly reasserted itself. It was a decided pleasure just to look at her. Her features betrayed her vulgar lineage, but that somehow added to their charm.

She resembled her coarse old father, one couldn't deny it. Her nose was short and a trifle too broad, with a suggestion about it of plumpness. Fine noses, like Crane's own, have an effect on leanness. Pauline's was of the lumpish variety, but small enough to be very pretty, even though it could never be considered aristocratic. The nostrils were neither thin nor sensitive; they were wide, perpendicular slits—not the least bit like the delicate, horizontal lines in a face of conventional beauty—and they made it appear as if she were humorously drawing down her upper lip. As a result the nose, which was really straight, seemed audaciously snub. Her mouth was of a generous size, but not large; it was expressive, the curve of the lips firm and full, the colour a moist, vivid red. The chin had an inflexible boldness and precision of line.

It was Pauline's eyes that transfigured her. They were of a deep, sombre brown, shot through with a clear beam from within that made them darkly luminous. All the tragedy and loneliness of her lot were in them. Despite the rich sumptuousness of their colour, they had a miraculous purity and candour. One could read her nature by them. They seemed to let the observer into her soul; they concealed nothing.

Crane, gazing at her, was moved ever and again to a generous pity, with an accompanying remorse that he couldn't for the life of him analyze. Pauline's eyes were certainly not a heritage from her father. They redeemed her other features from the latent sensuality that had been his gift.

Crane could picture to himself the terrible light of despair and accusation they would flash on any man who might have betrayed her into surrender. He was powerless to get rid of the idea. It obsessed him, conscious as he was of the girl's inevitable inheritance, from her disreputable parents, of weakness and passion. Her eyes wouldn't have possessed that anguished beauty if she had been removed from danger. The struggle must come some day; he wondered intensely what the result would be.

"She's an ardent little devil—one can see that," he told Seymour. "Where did she get those saint-eyes? They're like two guardian angels put there to watch over her. They're Conscience visible!"

"Yes, thank God!" Seymour returned with a fervour almost melodramatic. "They're the only things between her and perdition, I've often thought."

On the surface, the visit seemed delightfully jolly and matter-of-fact. The three of them had a busy time of it. Pauline was determined that Crane should see everything; it would have

struck her as an act of positive treachery had a single one of her treasures been overlooked—almost as if a mother had neglected to dandle one of the children in her nursery before the eyes of a privileged guest.

Crane's sly enthusiasms, that jarred on Seymour's sense of the fit and the honourable, delighted Pauline. By an uncharacteristic failure of perception, she had welcomed Crane in a flash as a man of transparent candour, as a person upon whom she could rely. She accepted his running fire of comments without the slightest suspicion of a *double entente.* Seymour had soon perceived how out of it he was. His two companions were absorbed in each other. Pauline, charmed, eager, vivacious, was drawn by an irresistible attraction. It would have caused her a keen pang of contrition if she had realized for a moment the quite obvious way in which she forgot the very existence of her faithful and distinguished guest. Held by Crane's fascination, she would time and again leave Seymour's occasional queries unanswered, for the simple reason that she hadn't known he had spoken to her.

Nothing escaped Peter, however; he noted Pauline's unconscious rudeness and got to the full the predicament of poor Seymour. In a desultory way, he would attempt to draw the architect into the current—it was a shame to see him high and dry—but his efforts were not heroic. They turned out pretty consistently abortive and Crane couldn't help confessing to himself that he was damned glad they did. He wanted, during these days, to saturate himself, to get Pauline in all her aspects. When he returned to New York he'd sift and strain and search; he'd determine then (to use her terrible father's vernacular) whether or not the claim merited a working.

Anything like a lasting intimacy he considered out of the question. The thing might progress after the usual fashion, might perhaps have its moments of delicious ardour; but it could never have for either of them the quality of importance or permanence. He knew nothing of Pauline's life; he reflected, however, that a girl of her type must have been involved in dozens of flirtations, must possess sufficient sophistication to keep her head. It was only at rare intervals that he glimpsed in her a disturbing, childlike trust, a possible innocence of a sort that would make even the most inoffensive meddling both perplexing and perilous.

At such times, he resolved to clear out forthwith. He didn't relish an entanglement from which it would be painful to extricate himself; moreover, he was essentially gentle and he hated the thought of causing the girl pain. In the past his genial weakness had precipitated more than one crisis that had resulted, on his side, in sorry treachery. The acute suffering that the acts of disloyalty had caused him had yet never hindered him from emerging with a whole skin. Something stronger than the lovable side of his nature had in every case asserted itself and driven him to the brutal severance.

It was as if he had no power to combat the instinct of self-protection. He would strike out blindly, shake off the soft shackles and then give way to the blackest horror of self-loathing. No man had ever experienced more bitter and even maudlin remorse than this gay and affable Crane; with him, however, the mood of repenting was unavailing. It left no mark upon him; it did not bring about any growth toward a saving self-knowledge. He was buoyant and irresponsible. The cloud of depression would of a sudden lift and leave him quite unaltered.

He had soon decided that it was preposterous to give way to scruples in regard to Pauline. She certainly wouldn't thank him for harbouring them! It was obvious that she was out for a lark. His defection would be merely a breach of the amenities.

On the Monday, when the two men were taking leave, Pauline remarked, "It's been so jolly. Do come again. Shall I count on you both for next Friday?"

Seymour shook his head to indicate a sad renunciation.

"Impossible! This jaunt has left me hideously in arrears. I dread to face the pile of work that's before me."

"Ah—I'm sorry."

Pauline showed her genuine disappointment. She was silent for a moment; evidently, as she stood there, she weighed the situation. Then, turning to Crane, she ventured it. "Will *you* come, Mr. Crane? I don't care a rap about the gossips. People talk about me anyhow, whether I give them cause or not; so I'm really at liberty to do as I please. I suppose that's partly why I'm so clever about looking after myself. Will you come? I should like it so much."

Crane, bending over her hand, felt it tremble in his own.

"It will be splendid," he returned, with an earnestness that this time had, for Seymour, no message of good-humoured raillery.

Pauline attempted a light tone.

"I'm an ignorant person. Would it be too dreadful? Perhaps I'd better find three or four others. The trouble is, you wouldn't *like* them."

"Oh, please don't!" Crane begged. "By actual arithmetic, one man is just half as compromising as two—particularly when the subtracted fellow happens to be the notorious John Seymour."

She laughed. "But if you can possibly make it, Mr. Seymour, you will? Don't bother even to wire—"

In the motor, Seymour faced Crane with an unwonted severity.

"You'll send your regrets, of course—and at once, Peter. She doesn't know what's proper, what people who haven't her decency call decent. There's no possible excuse for taking advantage of her ignorance."

Crane smiled enigmatically.

"You're a fairy godmother in trousers," he remarked. "But don't worry. I promise to get out of it, John."

CHAPTER III

Despite his assurances to Seymour, Crane made no attempt to break the engagement.

Friday found him at the Long Island estate. He had by that time arrived at very definite conclusions, so far as Pauline was concerned, and in a good many respects his impressions of the past week had undergone a change. She was a lovely little thing and he liked her; physically, she could communicate a sharp thrill—"the true *frisson*," as he phrased it. Apart from that—indeed, her attitude might be construed as a tacit confession—she couldn't expect to count with men of aristocratic standards. She was just a rather touching, middle-class figure, with unfortunate limitations that she herself was aware of.

For her, Crane decided, any attention would be in the nature of a wonderful flattery; he might take any liberty and she would regard it as homage. This attitude on Crane's part resulted, not from any exalted pride in his own powers, but from a shrewd suspicion of the handicaps inevitable to the girl's lot and her status in society. Any chap of a particularly favoured position in the world would have her at his mercy. Crane had often been able to test, by his own experience, the rich newcomer's acceptance of the axiom that people with family and traditions are immune from ordinary rules and must be conciliated in their most brutal exactions. Wasn't Pauline's own mother a case in point? Hadn't she sacrificed everything and become shamelessly, clamorously a victim to this social law?

Well, Crane pitied Pauline and had already a kind of fondness for her. He would therefore take no liberties. He would be unable to lose the sense, however, of some other chap's opportunity. It all came down to one thing: whatever the girl's admirable qualities, she could never count, because her position made her a helpless and certain victim. A girl who is abnormally rich and of vulgar stock is—unjustly, unpardonably, to be sure—almost on the same footing as a woman of the half world in the estimation of the men higher up in the scale. Crane had taken this for granted for years; the fact that he

applied it now to Pauline made him in no way worthy of condemnation. Had he possessed the intellectual faculty to judge her otherwise than by the accepted dogmas, their relation might have ripened without danger of blight. Crane was doomed from the first to have his view of her coloured by his theory. Directly he left her side his thoughts swung into the old deep ruts.

When he was with her all his sardonic sophistry dropped away from him. He saw her faults, of course. He was surrounded by the visible signs of her crassness and tastelessness. Indeed, her establishment resembled a gigantic symbol of untutored vulgarity. It dominated the country-side; it was so much a monument to mere commercial supremacy that it shocked the observer in somewhat the way a dollar-sign hundreds of feet high would have done. It immortalized the depredations of the wily old robber-baron; it was a tangible proof that the daughter was tarred with the same brush as the father.

Crane couldn't but realize the sordid truth; nevertheless, in Pauline's presence he came to feel himself a champion and a protector. His interest had waxed speedily to a genuine liking. The spell of her great eyes held him more and more; it could at times cause him to forget the less mysterious lure of her other physical attributes. As he gazed into the revealing depths, he glimpsed the quality in her that exalted her and made her a thing apart from the new-rich herd. It was a pity that this power of reading her significance should melt into thin air once he was literally out of range. While Pauline looked at him, Crane experienced an emotion of compelling force, a stir of pity and a wild desire to measure up to her trust; he knew her then for a woman of strength and inflexible purity.

It was during his fourth visit that he let his hold on himself relax. With a prophetic vision of the peril the situation contained, he had hitherto acted warily, though with a realization that the moment he'd have her in his arms must come. Pauline made no attempt to keep him at a distance. She believed in him utterly and scorned anything like subterfuge or concealment. From the instant she discovered her love for him she had confessed it in silent dignity by her unfaltering glance, with a frank surrender, with a fulness of quiet admission that evidenced her complete faith in his honour and integrity. A man of Crane's nature could not long resist the mutely eloquent offer.

The night when he determined to give his emotions their head was of just the right enchantment. The day had been of a caressing softness, the sort to make a man drowsily conscious from first to last of his physical well-being. Crane hadn't once lost the muffled beat of his pulses; even when he had been quite motionless he had been aware of a pleasant ache in his whole frame. Summer warmth always has this effect of drawing out one's fatigue and lassitude through every pore, but of failing to finish its soothing ministrations; a vague, throbbing soreness in the muscles is pretty sure to remain.

So with Crane; when twilight at last crept in, he felt as weak and heavy and happy as if he had been wallowing for hours in a bath of tepid water. Dinner had been of an exotic, plenteous richness; Pauline's table groaned with dishes extravagant, succulent, profuse in array, intricately builded, and smothered with sauces hot enough and colourful enough to resemble molten ore. Her idea of furnishing, as to the interior both of her house and of her guests, was magnificently consistent. Crane gorged to a point past repletion; on a languid evening, the body somehow persists in a state of hungry, unappeasable craving. Pauline, as usual, ate with moderation and drank only one glass of wine. For her, the display of food was the chief source of satisfaction; in the actual consumption of it she had little interest.

Later they strolled about the grounds aimlessly. Pauline, in a mood of sweet contentment, talked earnestly and with a measure of confidence that was touching. Her happiness was complete at times like the present, when she could

forget her loneliness in the joy of listening and sympathetic presence. She wanted to leave nothing unsaid; for her, a complete unbosoming, a telling over of the thoughts she had never expressed before seemed the supreme compensation of all the years of solitary exile. While she walked beside Crane, one hand on his arm, and her face raised in childish eagerness, the flow of her discourse sounded to him far away and faint. He didn't take in what she was saying. To him then, what Pauline uttered didn't matter; what he himself was feeling alone counted. Afterward, unfortunately, her words came back to him.

"Do you know," she had announced, "I don't really resent the way people ignore me. I see my shortcomings. I have a good education—I can read French; but I lack so much—oh, such a fearful lot. I wouldn't have let you come here like this if I hadn't realized that you understood. You can be charitable, because you're the sort to pity me for my faults and not to be blinded by them. You're like dear, kind Mr. Seymour. I've struggled against odds; I've come out all right. Don't I deserve, a little, your commendation?"

She paused for the affirmative sign. Crane, in the full flood of intoxication, put an unsteady hand on hers and smiled his encouragement.

Pauline sighed.

"I'm not a climber; of course you know that," she went on after a moment. "I don't want to shove my way in. It would be useless, for one thing; besides, even if I *did* succeed in gaining some ground it would mean nothing to me. I don't think for an instant that I'm as good as the people who have family; but if I was, I wouldn't be happy with them. Don't you see what I mean? Ah—you do; I'm like an open book to you. I suppose it shows I'm common to have such respect for the people who snub me; but I can't help it. I take after my mother for that; but *she* had ambition.

"Poor mother! You've heard all about her—everyone has. We might have been content together—only she was so restless and anxious to be fashionable. She's weak and foolish and ridiculous. But I do miss her—often I do. If she'd stayed with me till I was grown up, I believe I could have helped her. It's too late now. I'm afraid, at times, that she might come back. She wrote me not long ago—her only letter for over a year. She *may* come to me some time. It wouldn't do her any good—and she'd be a trial.

"She'll crave notoriety until she dies. It would be my duty to watch over her and try to amuse her, to make her forget how dreadfully worn and fagged she is. That would mean publicity, publicity, publicity! We'd be laughed at and sneered at. How could I hope to keep even *your* gentle sympathy then? My only chance for happiness is to be out of things, to live here always without ever going off my grounds. I love my place; your liking it has been—oh, such a comfort. I got my strength, my power to accomplish things from my father. This is my one big achievement and it's been my one consolation. I want to stay here—for ever and ever."

She paused, to take in lovingly the sweep of it. Then, with a wistful weariness, she murmured, "But it's so miserably lonely and empty. At times I ache for companionship—for one friendly and unselfish soul."

She broke off and pressed Crane's arm lightly.

"I shouldn't talk so—now," she told him. "I've been happy this summer. I've found what I've been after, what makes all the difference in the world to me."

She looked into his eyes; on her face there was no trace of boldness, no gay challenge, only the tranquil dignity of a woman who loved deeply, wisely, confidently, and who saw no need to hold back her confession. The silent revelation had never before possessed such intensity.

Crane, to give himself the last delicious thrill of suspense and longing, stopped short in his tracks and contem-

plated the girl without touching her. He felt giddy; he saw nothing clearly but her tremulous mouth. So he stood for a moment, motionless and gazing at the offered gift; then he bent down quickly, swept her into his arms, and, pressing his face to hers, kissed her. His lips closed on hers, as if he were crushing a flower to sense its keenest savour. The blood drummed at his temples.

While he still held her to him, however, a sudden realization of the futility of the thing awoke in him, and without warning the tension snapped. Whether fear or an instinctive stir of loyalty struck coldly across his ardour he could not have told; whatever the cause, he groped for control and gained it. His mind steadied and took up its functioning again.

He saw in a flash that Pauline was in his hands; and he understood both the peril and the treacherous brutality of his plying the advantage to the full. The pressure of his arms relaxed; with a pang of defeat and renunciation he veered from passion to a caressing tenderness. Brushing her cheek lightly with his lips, he released her. He was pale, unstrung, powerless to conceal the shaking of his jaw.

For the first time they found it impossible to meet each other's eyes. Crane stared at the ground, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, strove to appear unconcerned. Pauline examined her flashing rings. Crane knew that she was happy and that an unwonted shyness, a girlish timidity, was disturbing her serenity; her trust, however, remained unshaken—that was pathetically obvious.

At last she dropped her hands at her sides and turned to go back. Crane swung mutely into position beside her. They said nothing; the silence remained unbroken until they reached the house.

Pauline kept her face averted and peered at the secret stars that seemed to pant in harmony with her clamorous heart. Crane stared gloomily at the ground. It would have brought the girl all the anguish of disillusion had she been able to read Crane's thoughts; on his side, the man would have experienced the deepest self-loathing if Pauline's exalted rhapsodies had been made audible.

At the foot of the colossal staircase in the entrance-hall they separated with a simple good-night that sounded to them both thin and absurdly meaningless. Pauline mounted the marble flight without looking back.

Crane, watching her, was moved to a miserable pity. She appeared to him then tragically fragile and guileless and helpless in the midst of the vast gleaming spaces. He turned and strolled desultorily out to the terraces. While he lit a cigarette a clock near by boomed the hour. Crane counted the strokes.

"My God!" he muttered. "*Ten* o'clock."

His blank astonishment was a proof of the prodigious significance of the struggle he had been through. It had seemed of an exhausting length, and in reality it had lasted but a few minutes.

CHAPTER IV

LATE the next night, Crane sat in his bedroom. He had drawn a chair to the window; his elbows rested on the sill and his face was buried in his hands. He still had on his evening clothes; the points of his collar tortured his neck, but, though he ever and again flung up his chin with an instinctive striving after greater ease, he was unaware of the bodily discomfort.

He was a prey to the most cruel of all depressions—the black despair that follows a mad, irremediable transport. Crane's remorse pressed him down, overwhelmed him with an actual, palpable weight. The particular torment of which he was the victim was like a stumbling under an intolerable burden, a groping in the darkness for a foothold. Pauline in her anguish became visible to him by blinding flashes. He saw her eyes, all the more terribly accusing for the sultry flame in them that had not quite died out; he could still

recall the shudder convulsing her when she had felt his lips on her throat.

Then he remembered nothing but her harsh sobs and the dawning on her face of a new, crushing suspicion. He had left her crouched in the darkest corner of the ornate pavilion on the brink, with its sculptured groups of flabby Loves rioting everywhere in the true fashion of the Roman decadence. The half-ruined edifice had been one of her greatest treasures; he wondered what it would mean to her now. They had made it their destination this evening; Crane had known when they crossed the threshold that he was beyond the power of a whispered fear or a call of prudence. The drama had been swiftly relentless, as had been the immediate repentance.

Pauline had pleaded only that she wanted to be alone; Crane, taking the charitable course, had made no attempt to comfort her. He had strode out into the darkness of the Park, and, flinging himself down at the foot of a tree, had shut his eyes and cowered before the avenging furies. For hours he stayed there, silent except for an occasional muttered curse. At last he got up, shook himself wearily and made his way back to the house. In his bedroom he found the warmth of the night oppressive; he had kicked a chair over to the window and thrown himself into it.

His mouth twisted to a snarl as his whirling thoughts concentrated on his vacillation throughout the critical day. He had risen in the morning determined to have the thing out with Pauline, to tell her the truth and get away. He must force her to realize, he'd reflected, that she could never count with him more than with the other people of his sort; he must show her the futility, the utter fruitlessness of their intimacy. With marriage out of the question, and with the relation altered and complicated by the episode of the night before, an abrupt severance was the one sensible course.

He had planned it all carefully; but the moment Pauline had appeared with her cordial smile he had wavered, hesitated, and resolved to prepare for his revelation with a scrupulous care that would make the shock of his words less cruel. So he had given her all day his gentlest attentions; and when evening came he knew he had sacrificed his priceless opportunity for confronting her with the difficult facts of the case. He had been too kind—that had been his mistake. By an unconscious exercise of strategy, he had succeeded only in tying his own hands; he had hoodwinked himself into believing that by his tenderness he was leading up to the words that would bring release.

As a matter of fact, he had charmed the girl to a stauncher trust in him, to a state of mind that would have made the blow incredibly unfair; moreover, his ministrations had worked dangerously on his own emotion. When dinner was over, he could feel sick at his weakness and imminent treachery; but by that time everything had faded to insignificance before the overpowering force of his fierce desire.

When Pauline had left him at the table he had already surrendered.

"Oh, hell!" he mused, throwing away his cigar as soon as he had lighted it. "Why should *I* hesitate? What else does such a girl expect?"

Joining her on the lawn, Crane had deliberately avoided her brilliant eyes. He had dubbed her an accomplice; he was determined to treat her so; and yet he was afraid to face a glance that might arouse his conscience before it should be too late to effect a renunciation similar to that of the night before.

Suddenly, as he sat huddled over the sill of his window, he became aware that it had begun to rain. The first big drops fell in heavy splashes; they made an intermittent music, each with its own distinct and spluttering sound, like preluding notes. Then, without warning, the clouds emptied themselves of their accumulated store; the downfall became a solid curtain of water. The black darkness grew murmurous. A subdued, silvery clamour awoke and increased in volume until it filled the night with its

liquid voice. The ground drank up the torrent and joined in the tumultuous song, at first softly and sleepily, afterward with a loud gurgling, as of some beast that wallowed and lapped and greedily glutted itself.

A breeze of delicious coolness blew on Crane's face. He got up, and, leaning far out, let the rain stream over his forehead, pelt on his closed eyelids, course down his cheeks. He opened his mouth and felt on his tongue the flat taste of the drops. With his arms braced on the sill, he received the full force of the deluge while it lasted.

It ceased with an amazing abruptness. At the moment when the steaming hiss was at its height silence descended swiftly like a mother-bird on her noisy brood. The downpour had spent itself. The air was miraculously still. From the soaked earth there came at long intervals the sound of a heavy plash. That was all.

Crane turned away from the window. The cramped stiffness of his limbs and the jarring ache in his head struck him for the first time. His brain, however, had quieted; that at least was a blessed relief. He switched on the lights mechanically and began to undress. Five minutes later he was in bed and asleep from sheer mental and physical exhaustion.

Late in the morning, a note from Pauline arrived with his breakfast-tray. The few lines were pathetically dignified, of a restraint quite admirable. There was no hint of weak pleading. She scorned to throw herself on his mercy —that was obvious. Pride prevented her from playing on his sympathies by means of her abject plight. The phrasing of her letter was careful, judicious, and stiff. The characters alone betrayed her; her hand had evidently trembled uncontrollably while she wrote.

"I ask you to go away at once," the note ran. "Don't think I condemn you. I understand. But it would be painful for us both to see each other now. We must meet only when we can face our problems, when we can hope to find some way out. Anything like a clear view is out of the question at present. So we must wait and try to be quite *fair* with each other. If you insist on seeing me to-day, it will bring no solution—it will merely add to my misery and unhappiness and shame. Remember that I don't make excuses for myself. I know, of course, that you will be perfectly just; I have already got that far toward a saner outlook. I have been frightened, distrustful; but this morning I feel again something of my faith in you—"

CHAPTER V

Ten days later, Crane arrived at Newport to pay his sister, Mrs. St. George, a visit that he had put off unconscionably from week to week. Coming to town on a shopping expedition, she had buttonholed him for luncheon, and, after a scolding of some length, had wrested from him a consent to run down for the Tennis Tournament.

"You're seeing altogether too much of Timothy Welsh's daughter," she had told him. "Why do you get involved with these queer specimens, Peter? Of course, I know there's nothing in it; but when people begin to annoy a man's *family* with their gossip it's really time he woke up to his proper responsibilities."

Crane had leaned across the table with a sudden earnestness. He was on the point of confronting his sister with an astounding recital of facts; but the half-indulgent irony in her flashing eyes arrested him. He looked away and for a moment said nothing. Then he dropped casually, "Yes, indeed, Ethel—please prepare for me on Sunday."

He had refused to consider a trip to Newport until he should have reached a final decision in regard to Pauline. Well —he had forged an irrevocable determination now. The visit would be in the nature of a challenge. He must needs throw down the gauntlet to his own people. He could not hope for any result other than a definite break.

Crane had faced his problem, during the ten solitary days in New York, with

conspicuous honesty. Directly he had read Pauline's note he had—for the first time—made no compromise with his weakness. He had given his wily instinct of self-protection no quarter whatever. At last the realization had come to him that an easy shirking, a suave begging off of matters of importance could in the end commit a man to a lifelong cowardice.

Heretofore his skill in escaping from entanglements had been somehow excusable. He had betrayed no supreme trust; the dishonesty he had practised had for him proved the winning stroke in a battle of wits with an opponent by no means estimable. At least, so he had been able to feel after the first throbs of repentance had died out.

That Pauline was different from the rest he knew. Deliberately, he threw aside all his former shrewd aspersions. The task was a stiff one; his natural tendency would have been to focus a keen light on her crass faults and to read by them a warrant for his own desertion. The conviction of Pauline's integrity had much to do with Crane's new uprightness; by contrast, the realization of his indisputable weakness had forced itself upon him and awakened in him a terrified desire to cling to what self-respect he had left. As for any prospect of happiness to come from his throwing his lot in with the girl, Crane knew the absurdity of such a hope. He could still wince at a vision of the future; but he stood his ground notwithstanding. He was ready for the first signal from Pauline.

It was for chance to intervene at this juncture. Crane had succeeded only after a prolonged struggle in conquering the trickier side of his nature. It had been necessary to plan out every detail of his honourable course, to trace each step to the very moment of the final settlement with Pauline, so that no possible loophole for escape should present itself. It was indeed as if he had learned by heart a tremendously difficult rôle; a single unlooked-for shift in the scene might be perilous. The fact that he was suddenly caught off his guard, that he was taken unawares, amounted to a grim misfortune.

For the first day of the Tournament Ethel had gathered together a congenial crew. Nobody paid any attention to the match. It was merely an occasion for rushing about from box to box. Crane found it both jolly and exhilarating. There were so many pretty women he hadn't seen for months, so many opportunities for the kind of banter he excelled in.

The Casino could always stir delightful memories; no place in the world was more lovely, more engagingly modest. Like a great vivid billiard-table, it offered up its lawns; over them one rolled as it were in parabolic curves, like a ball in play. One fetched up with a polite click against stationary groups; perhaps, managing to nose out a bright red or yellow companion, one proceeded to guide it to some out-of-the-way pocket into which one disappeared with it.

Crane loved to develop the far-fetched figure to the last extravagance. He realized its weak points. For one thing, the women were seldom round or glistening. They were for the most part slender and of a subdued lustre, not by the widest stretch of the imagination to be confused with billiard-balls! They resembled more a crowd of fabulous birds sunning themselves in the daintiest of cages. Well—whatever the right image might be, Crane adored the spot. It brought out his easy snobbery as nothing else could.

His sister never failed to sparkle in her Newport setting. Superbly at home, connected by some tie of relationship with almost everybody in sight, quite conscious, moreover, of her beauty and distinction, she possessed all the charm of a favourite petted child in some royal nursery. She was small, dark, and fiery. People spoiled her unconscionably and found, in her audacious petulance, their reward. It was no wonder she deemed it her right to be rude whenever she pleased. Crane, facing her in her husband's box, couldn't help feeling a thrill of delicious satisfaction as he watched her and chuckled over the shafts of wit

and ridicule she sent flying in every direction.

All at once he became conscious that a group in a near-by box was attracting the ironical attention of the gallery. He looked up with a vague curiosity that on the instant veered to a hot confusion. He had seen Pauline and had felt within himself a quick pang of revulsion. She sat with her back to him; she was talking to the woman beside her, and her head was so turned as to make the profile visible to him. A big hat of vivid pink, with a cluster of extravagant roses, cast a shadow over her eyes and robbed them of their intense brilliance. Her features had a bluntness, a heavy sullen prettiness that pointed her origin startlingly.

The gown she wore was an exquisite thing of white lace; it should have been of the right, becoming sort for her figure. She seemed ill at ease in it, however, and awkwardly self-conscious. It was obvious that Pauline knew she faced a hostile gathering; but the realization did not sound a challenging note in her ears. It burdened her, rather, to a deep dejection. She was aware at this moment of nothing but her shortcomings. The people about her had the right to criticize and poke fun at her, since they were better than she was. She could feel a bewildered pain; but there was in her heart no resentment, only a sorrowful acceptance of her ignominy.

Her words, that had somehow crept into Crane's consciousness on the night two weeks before, stirred now in his memory. Helplessly, as he gazed at her, he submitted to the renewed marshalling of all his old prejudices. Pauline, the while, continued to converse desultorily, furtively, with her companion.

Crane noted how she talked under her breath, as if fearful of being considered presumptuous should she move her lips or utter an audible sound. Her whole attitude confessed her the intruder, the trespasser on a hallowed domain. She kept her eyes lowered; she seemed to cower in the hope that she might be passed by unnoticed.

It was the first time Crane had ever seen her in public; as he followed out his observation, a dark flush spread over his cheeks.

The woman beside Pauline explained but too thoroughly her presence on the scene. It could be nobody in the wide world except Mrs. Welsh. She possessed a weak, battered and all but demolished beauty. Her blue eyes, that she kept with difficulty wide open and coquettishly quizzical, had a fevered vacancy. The features yet retained a childish sweetness that pointed in the cruellest fashion the ravage the years had wrought around them. The cheeks were hollow, a brilliantly tinted and glazed concavity. The make-up covered the tell-tale lines of suffering; but it failed to conceal that the poor woman was in a faint daze, that she was miserably ill. Her hands, with a persistent, nervous vivacity, played over her hair, over her gown, over the ropes of pearls she flaunted; they darted about and quivered in restless intensity, as if they'd been humming-birds at a flowering shrub.

The lady appeared to be immersed in clouds of mauve chiffon rather than actually gowned. She was both aged and infantile, both vivid and ghastly. Her high, tremulous treble, with its accompanying gushes of hysterical, insipid laughter, floated piercingly to Crane and caused him a shudder. Whatever Pauline's attitude might be, it was manifest that her mother was bent on making a bewitching impression. With her drugged perceptions, she in all probability couldn't see clearly; the gallery must be for her just a swimming blur that left her at liberty to draw her own flattering conclusions. It was for the unhappy daughter to get the reception in its true aspect.

Crane let his gaze drop miserably to the floor. He had not bothered to give the two men in the Welsh party his scrutiny. He knew only too well the type Pauline's mother would perforce select as escorts.

His sister, the keenest of observers, had caught the swift change in Crane's expression. Turning slightly in her

chair, she directed her bright eyes to Pauline's box. If the Welshes might be termed poachers, Ethel at that moment took on the value of an indignant little gamekeeper. Her gaze was as sharp as the jab of a hornet. It had power to draw Pauline's uneasy attention. Startled, Crane raised his head. The next moment, he found himself looking straight at Pauline. He saw her bite her lips with an involuntary fierceness of protest at the unfairness of her predicament. Even more than Crane himself, she sensed the tragic irony of the situation.

"How could I hope to keep even *your* gentle sympathy then?" Surely she must be aware that he remembered the words.

Pauline's face had become suffused with colour; Crane was quite pale now.

The two remained motionless for what seemed an interminable period. Then, with a desperate attempt to appear merely casual, she bowed; he returned the salute. She had given him his chance to make the nod cool, distant, and non-committal. He had taken advantage to the full of her kindness.

Pauline, as she turned away, pressed a hand over her mouth in a last supreme striving after self-control. The effort proved her mettle. Straightway, she could meet unflinchingly Mrs. Welsh's thin babble of inquiry. The excited mother had noticed the bow, perhaps even had managed to make out the blush, and was evidently avid of particulars.

The pumping of his heart filled Crane's ears. He answered his sister's pointed comments without any definite knowledge of what he was saying. The silent interchange with Pauline revived his pity for her. He was stricken, moreover, at the vision of his facile, cowardly acceptance of the boon she had offered him. By every law of decency, of fitness, it was his part now to get up and go over to her box. Pauline poignantly needed his aid at this moment—of that he could have no doubt. The priceless opportunity for an open avowal had come. Once he sprang to whole-hearted action, the problem would have been met and the solution hastened.

Never, in the whole dim future, would a crisis so rackingly painful arise. The stage was set, with the entire congregation of his associates forgathered to witness his cordial championing of the solitary and ridiculed girl.

Crane, as he sat there, experienced a sudden grim exultation at the prospect of gulping down the bitter draught before the astounded crowd. The thing could be done deftly, without ostentation. He had only to join Pauline and her mother with a frank cordiality and presently to leave the place in their company. People could put their characteristic, definite interpretations on his conduct. It would simply mean that he had formed a new allegiance; it would put the ultimate stamp on his attitude to Pauline.

So Crane resolved to see it through. He was not aware of any hesitation; to him it seemed that he had mapped out his course and was biding his time. As a matter of fact, the something stronger than his conscious will—the stealthily watchful instinct of self-protection—was at work within him and, exerting a baleful strength, kept him helpless in his chair.

It was as if an unseen force of which he remained ignorant had pressed a knee against his chest. When at length he saw the Welsh party leave their box and make for the stairs, he attempted in a panic to get to his feet. Then he found himself at grip with the full-fledged power, wily, indomitable, triumphant. It weighed him down, crushed him like an enemy in a nightmare. As a result, he sat for an appreciable time quite motionless in his chair.

The abrupt conclusion of the struggle almost resembled a return to consciousness. Crane jumped precipitately to his feet and rushed out into the aisle. Pauline had disappeared. He had shirked the crucial test. By this time, too, the elements within him had worked to so perfect a fusion that he

could reflect, with a sophistical, untenable bitterness of conviction, that it would be utterly useless to follow her.

For the remainder of the day, Crane's mood was one of miserable perplexity. Remorse and self-justification mingled persistently in his uneasy thoughts. He longed to get clear of the maze of doubt. A decision, of whatever sort, would, he felt, act as a refreshing quietus. He'd got to the point where he couldn't bear longer the perpetual flux in his brain; if he didn't soon commit himself irrevocably, he would go mad. He stood now on immensely perilous ground; he would be quite incapable of neglecting any dropped hint that might serve as a guide out of the labyrinth.

Alone with the other men in Mrs. St. George's dining-room after dinner, Crane felt himself for the first time lifted pleasantly out of his moodiness. He had drunk a good deal, and his goading thoughts seemed somehow to have faded out. He sat in a warm daze in the midst of the convivial crew and found, to his amazement, that he was both happy and exuberantly communicative. His uncertainty of the day struck him as preposterous, a vanquished bogie that had been expelled forever by the incantations of mere casual, social banter.

The man on his left was talking. "Yes, she *is* a pretty little thing—damned attractive. And after all, she doesn't belong to the first fearful generation. Girls like her progress; under the proper guidance, they often go far. Of course, there'd be a good many weeds to root up—that's obvious. It would take courage, though it *could* be done. But I don't suppose one's really going to marry her—eh, Peter?"

Crane was silent. He wondered with intensity how frank he'd been. Evidently he had been discussing Pauline with conspicuous relevance to the problem in hand. He mused into his glass now for a long moment.

Suddenly, he faced his companion and, before he was aware what he was saying, the words were out.

"Marry her?" he had asked. "Marry her? But why, in the name of all that's holy, should I *marry* her?"

His voice had been loud, with a trumpet-note of freedom and exultation in it. At least half a dozen men had heard him. Of the meaning the words held there could be no possible doubt. Crane had gayly, delightedly confessed to his relations with Pauline. He had followed out the proffered lead. He had taken sides with his own sort against the girl.

The next morning found him haggard and unsteady from a profitless vigil. Savagely he had cursed himself and taken the full measure of his weakness, of his perfidy. The hours of silent communion had done no good whatever. He knew himself at last powerless to revoke his decision. He had openly thrown over Pauline. The day had given him his opportunity both for generosity and for treachery.

Well—he'd chosen. He must abide by his act. His whole life, so it seemed, had been a slow preparation for this crisis. The conclusion had been inevitable, from the moment—years ago, long before he had known of Pauline's existence—when he first allowed his insidious weakness to sway him. He had been his own master once—but not now. The shaping of his life was forever out of the control of his better nature.

Pauline was a forfeit; his own self-respect, too, had gone down in the conflict.

CHAPTER VI

CRANE could even now find a specious sort of comfort in the plan he projected; he was indeed able to affirm silently that the course squared with Pauline's plea at their first meeting.

Since the time had come for an irrevocable break, he must at last face her, he must effect the sharp and instantaneous cleavage.

"It's the gradual realization of somebody's desertion that I hate," she'd told him. The remembrance of her words seemed miraculously to clear his path.

It didn't occur to him that he was considering himself, too, at this moment. The immense difficulty of the imminent scene alone struck him; the courage it would take brought a satisfaction and inspired a spurious conviction of his strength. He refused to consider the fact that a quick, neat shearing away of the shackles would work to his own advantage by leaving him on the moment absolutely free.

On the day following his return to New York, Crane drove out to Pauline's Long Island place. He was informed at the door that Miss Welsh was walking somewhere in the grounds. Without hesitation, he made for the ruinous pavilion on the rocks. He had not looked at the extravagant edifice when he had come by it in the motor; now, however, he took for granted, with an unconscious stir of recollection and of instinctive egotism, that he would find her there.

As he skirted a great clump of rhododendrons a few feet distant from the place, he caught sight of her. She stood, facing him, in the doorway; from the stiff erectness of her figure, it was manifest that she was waiting for him. Their eyes met; then Pauline, averting her face, stepped quickly out on the stretch of lawn and hurried up to him. As she approached, she betrayed neither eagerness nor anger. It was obviously her intention to head him off in the open, to avoid at any cost a meeting in the pavilion.

"So you've come," she said at length in a low voice. She stood now at a short distance from him. "You've gone over all I said in my letter; you're prepared to be quite *fair* with me, to show me that my faith was wonderfully well placed?"

She flashed him a swift glance of scorn and looked away. "A woman can trust a man and still not be a perfect fool—isn't that the truth you're here to tell me?"

"I'm here to keep nothing back," Crane returned. "I'm here to be honest and to let you see how I've struggled to measure up and how I've miserably failed. If I'd proved worthy, I could be happy to-day. God knows I'm far from being that."

"Is that honest?" Pauline's tone was sharp. "If you're really honest, you'll tell me at once that you are too good for me. Do you think I'm stupid and foolish enough to believe anything else? Perhaps you *have* been fair to me—perhaps you've worried and fretted about me. But you've made up your mind now; you wouldn't come to me of your own accord unless you'd got the better of your scruples. Don't, please, try to be gentle—you'd only be the more insulting. You're too good for me—that's what you're here to say. It will be pleasanter for us both if you get it over quickly."

"Ah *no!*" he protested. "I've got to show you, a little, where I stand. Don't you see what it comes to? I've been fair to *myself*, Pauline. I've examined myself through and through and I realize that I'm not worth your anger. I'm hardly worth your scorn. I've gone where my weakness led me. I haven't either strength or loyalty left in me. You're far *above* me. Give me at least the credit for understanding that. Remember that I've done nothing deliberately; I've merely been driven by my own faults into a hole. I'm without courage, without self-respect. I'd sacrifice everything for the smallest part of your fineness and truth, Pauline. I've given myself up to what's base and treacherous.

"Don't think that, because I am helpless, I'm also content. You've suffered because of me—there's no denying that; but you have the satisfaction of feeling your unhappiness is no fault of your own. I have *no* refuge, Pauline. My misery's all of my own making. I've sold myself to the devil and I can't go back on my bargain!"

The confession, beginning on a note of carefully planned humility, had at last moved him to a despairing self-abasement and had struck from him a complete avowal, an abandonment to miserable sincerity that left him pale be-

fore the vision of his plight. He followed the thing through bitterly.

"It's not in my power," he wound up, "to give you allegiance in future. I've forfeited my chance. If I had the opportunity again, I wouldn't *take* it. I've sunk to that, Pauline. A traitor to the good in himself's a traitor to the good in others. Oh, you're well rid of me—damned well rid of me."

"Rid of you!" Pauline shivered and put a hand to her eyes. "As if I could ever be rid of you! For the rest of my life you'll be in my heart to torture me. I love you—you've known that from the beginning; you've taken advantage of it cruelly. There's enough of my mother in me to make me go on caring even after you've insulted me. Do you think a woman who had pride, who had self-respect, would tell you she loved you now? You pity me, just at this minute; you condemn yourself. But you'll soon be laughing at me and your friends will know everything there was between us. I'll have that to haunt me and keep me wretched; but it will do no good. I'll never lose my love for you nor my feeling that you're better than I. If my faith in you had been justified, I could have developed and made myself your equal. You've taken that from me; you've brought me out Timothy Welsh's girl—and nothing in the world more! I'm simply common and ordinary and you have the right to treat me as you please—"

"Pauline!" Crane interrupted sharply, with a pang half of protest and half of guilt.

She paid no attention but continued in a harsh, broken voice.

"It's true, it's *true!* You've seen how I acted in public. You've all talked of nothing but me and my poor, sick, foolish mother. Ah, I know, I *understand*, I tell you. You're right, perfectly right, perfectly justified. Don't I prove it, as I stand here? Could the woman who admits she loves you at a time like this ever be anything but a disgrace to you?"

Crane stepped forward abruptly and seized her wrists in a tense grip.

"Pauline, Pauline," he cried out, "for heaven's sake don't talk like that. Let to-day finish it, so far as I'm concerned. I've acted brutally toward you. Remember that—and forget you loved me. It was never *I* you loved. It was the man I seemed to be, the man you *thought* me, that you gave yourself to. Keep him in your heart—for a warning or an ideal or whatever it may be. Don't, *don't* confuse him with me as I am now. I don't deserve it. It would be ruinous to you and an intolerable judgment for me. You've suffered—through me; don't fool yourself into making the curse permanent."

Pauline, her hands hanging limp in his, faced him with a weary certainty.

"It was *you*," she persisted, "that I loved. It wasn't an ideal. That's gone—you *must* know it—everything's gone that used to hold me up. You changed me; I can't go back now to what I was. I was proud of myself once, and I had the right to be. I could never have lost all I had fought for and gained if you had helped me. For weeks, I've had nothing but fear when I've thought of you. I've suspected the truth ever since I sent you away. How could *I* count, after all? It's come down to that every time. I'd prepared myself for something bigger than I should have hoped for. I was mistaken, beaten completely. From the minute I realized that, I gave up trying. I'm not a bit better now than my father and mother before me. It's the truth. You can't deny it, and I *know* it."

She freed herself and retreated a step.

"Now please go," she pleaded, "please go at once. Your being here is certainly painful for you and hard for me. I want to be alone, in this place I love, in this place you've probably ridiculed from the start. I've said far too much already; don't force me to say *more*—"

She covered her face with her hands and her breathing caught in a sob.

They were silent while Pauline pressed both palms against her mouth and struggled for control. Then she

dropped her arms to her sides, heavily. The impression of her fingers showed dark on her white cheeks. She fixed him with her great, sombre eyes that seemed to send out a last dying gleam. Crane lowered his head, unable to meet the anguished, mute accusation. The glance had forced home the command that her words failed to carry. Without looking at her again, he turned and walked away in a blank despair. He did not see the flickering fire burn out; he did not perceive the lightning-like extinguishment of her guardian-flames, the rayless, expressionless darkness that settled over her eyes.

Ten minutes later, when he came in view of the pavilion on the brink, he saw Pauline crouched over the balustrade. Her arms, wide apart, rigidly supported her as she leaned far out. Her head was sunk on her breast, as if she had not the physical power to hold it upright. She had at that instant a pitiful dignity in her utter surrender to a grief that knew neither cowardice nor fear. Broken and crushed, surrounded by her spurious splendours, with her eyes plunging into the abyss, she hung there, miserable, silent, determined.

She had heard the motor; a slow shudder convulsed her and her taut arms relaxed. Crane felt himself go cold; an icy sweat sprang out on his body.

In a flash, Pauline's purpose had grown clear to him. His heart tugged at his side and dropped like lead; then, as he shut his eyes dizzily, the blood rushed back into his veins. He sprang to his feet. With his hideous terror, there had awakened in him a mad desire to reach her side, to take her in his arms, an overpowering impulse to seize her now for his own irreparably, eternally. He had forgotten the world, his new-won freedom, everything but the girl herself.

"Pauline! Pauline!" His cry rang out stridently. He had stumbled out of the automobile with outstretched arms.

She did not turn her face to him. Her arms crumpled under the weight of her body as she threw herself into space. She fell straight and with an appalling, rushing swiftness. Ten feet below the pavilion a rock jutted out; her forehead struck against it.

Crane sickened and lurched forward with a stifled cry. He had seen the livid gash torn across her brow; before the blood had begun to gush from the wound, Pauline had hurtled over the verge and disappeared. From afar below, there came the sound of her body striking the water.

CHAPTER VII

By the grimmest stroke of an ironic fate, perhaps also because of the ministrations of a half dozen eminent medical men, Pauline recovered. For weeks she lay unconscious and dying, only to have the gift of extinction incredibly snatched away.

Crane remembered the events of the terrible day itself but dimly. Bruised and bleeding from a perilous descent, he had plunged into the water and dragged her up on a stretch of beach. The rest had been a blur, a chaos through which disorganized hands of frightened and bedizened servants had flashed with confused speed, through which the thin plaints of Mrs. Welsh sounded ineffectually, hollowly. A semblance of order had been achieved only after the arrival of the surgeons.

Pauline, the centre of the whirling excitement, had rested in the inscrutable, unapproachable calm of death. Shattered apparently beyond hope of cure, she yet seemed a being scornfully apart and aloof from the puny efforts of the mere human herd. It had appeared somehow in the nature of a sacrilege to erase from her the marks of divinity and bring her back to actual, bodily suffering. At any rate, the accomplished fact constituted one of the great surgical triumphs of a generation.

For Pauline and Crane, on the other hand, the recovery worked to a tragic anti-climax. The suicide had severed the relation superbly. It had given the

girl a baleful majesty; it had stamped her as a creature tameless and proud. Her faults, her deliberate confessions faded out on the instant of the sacrificial act and she became the woman who, betrayed cruelly, had killed herself rather than face the sordid truth, rather than give harborage to a weakness that might end in further surrender. For Crane, Pauline would have been a lifelong regret. He would have remembered only that he had wished with the force of his entire nature to make amends and that he had been magnificently thwarted. His recollection of her would have narrowed down and concentrated on the ultimate moment, to the exaltation both of the girl and of himself.

The protracted illness resembled a relentless dilution of the essence in the cup of suffering. Crane yet drank deep, but the taste grew flat and vapid.

For one thing Pauline's attempt on her own life had soon afforded the newspapers food for scandal. Every periodical traced the stages of her improvement, with an inevitable dwelling on "possible motives" that resolved itself into malicious, scandalous chatter. There were pictures of Pauline and her parents, views of her notorious establishment; before long, throwing off all reserve, the less estimable sheets published photographs purporting to be likenesses of Crane himself. He was dubbed "The well-known young clubman said to be the immediate cause of the tragedy," or "The scion of a famous line thought to be implicated."

Of course, this publicity made Pauline doubly pitiful. Crane realized it; but it none the less tainted his memories and cheapened intolerably the whole wretched affair. It poisoned, for him, the purity of the vision that had been before his eyes. Mrs. Welsh, moreover, was a blighting influence. Pauline's door was barred to him; but during his visits he found the mother ever on the scene. Her feverish cordiality, her meaningless tears, her joy at the distinction his presence lent to things, infuriated him.

Pauline's illness had given her the right to drink freely and to stimulate herself, even beyond her wont, with her pernicious drugs. Often she had no control over her speech or her movements. Leaning heavily on his arm, swaying against him in a half-blind daze, she would wax, in the effort to hear her own voice over the tumult of her irregular pulses, to a strident squeak. Crane, watching her narrowly on these occasions, could have no doubt as to the source of the newspapers' inferences and innuendoes.

Pauline at last sent for him. The crisis had been passed a fortnight since and she was now definitely committed to convalescence. Crane, knowing that he was to be alone with her, could not at once summon the courage to enter the bedroom. That the scene would be immensely critical he was aware. The state of his own thoughts, also, was patent to him as it had seldom been in the past. He had reached the point now of unflinching antagonism. Pauline, failing in her supreme attempt to spring clear of her sordid heritage, must have been thrown back on a full acceptance of her lot.

She herself had warned him of the decline the summer had brought. At present, she must be immersed beyond recall in the middle-class darkness. Suffering could have worked no miracle of purification or refinement; it could have resulted only in an unqualified surrender.

Pauline had possessed strength; the lingering weeks of pain, however, must have killed that. Since she had been unable to put an eternal quietus on her inherited flaw, she could not but be the victim to-day of that parental gift. She was the Welshes' child; with the mother vividly present to Crane, how could he throw off the suspicion that Pauline herself might be determined to make of her futile act a sword above his head? The thought placed him at once on the defensive.

Alone with her in the bedroom, Crane for a moment stood in silence at the door. He had given her one swift

glance and then fixed his eyes on the floor. On guard as he was, he knew the peril, for him, of a too thorough examination of her pitifully wasted figure. Pauline sat propped up with pillows. There were bandages over her eyes. Only the lower part of her face —her sunken cheeks and her mouth, from which the warm colour had been drained away—was visible. Her hands, clasped tightly in her lap, shook.

It was she who broke the stillness.

"We have only a minute," she warned him, in a voice that sounded unutterably weary. "I'm not strong enough to say all I'd like. I want to make things clear —in the little time I'm allowed; then I can sleep."

She paused and the muscles around her mouth twitched as if, stiff from their long disuse, they pained her. Then she resumed.

"I shall come out all right, you know —a few scars that won't disfigure me." She put a groping hand to the coverings that hid her eyes, and let it drop heavily. "And I shan't try to kill myself a second time! So you see, I don't wish to threaten. It's a full understanding I'm after—nothing else. You are clever; I needn't say much to you. I don't hope for a great deal. I have blundered, because I was ignorant. From the first I hadn't really a chance. It was more my fault than yours—all the misery could have been avoided if I'd been somebody different, somebody *better*."

She drew in her breath sharply, and broke off.

"Ah—but I'm forgetting; I've *got* to be quick," she murmured the next moment. "I ask you not to talk, not to explain, not to make a single excuse—only to answer one question. I love you and I'm not good enough to count. Will you take me as I am? When I am quite well again, will you let things *go on* until—you're tired of me?"

Crane's eyes dilated and, taking an abrupt step backward, he muttered the words over, at first unable to grasp their full significance. It was only after he had repeated them again and again that the meaning struck into his dazed consciousness and fastened there. They had an effect like a stunning blow. Pauline's actual presence and the room where he stood were obliterated. He was aware now simply of the dizzying turbulence in his brain.

He lowered his head and waited. It was as if what Pauline had said had been the last physical element thrown into a chemical solution. For the moment, the added substance made the bubbling confusion seethe the more; but the value of it would soon assert itself, to the ultimate achieving of a transparent clarity. So in fact Crane's mind slackened its speed and settled at last to a steady conviction.

He looked at Pauline. Her head had sunk lower on the pillows and her lips were stretched to a thin line. The beating of her heart shook her whole frame. Crane felt for her an anguished pity; but the emotion was powerless to exert an influence over his coldly conquering, steeled mind. Pauline had sought to hold him at any cost; she had cast aside everything that had differentiated her from her unspeakable mother. She was in the dust before him now; Crane, however, reflected with biting keenness on the diabolical shifts, the tricks and subterfuges, the venom distilled from the very heart of a woman who clung to a man on such an understanding. A relation of the sort could develop poisonous tentacles that nothing could shake off. Pauline to-day was miserable, crushed, absolutely sincere in her love and self-abasement. But Pauline in a year's time? Pauline when he should at last have tired for good?

Crane, with his training and traditions, knew the well-marked stages on the road, knew that a girl like Pauline could lose all scruples, all decency, with a fearful rapidity. She threw herself on his mercy now; the future must bring its prodigious change. He could project himself into the maelstrom, could see himself vindictive, brutal, insolent, but none the less inextricably involved and sunk in a cowardly accept-

ance. It would be inevitable, his ending up as the victim, the actual prey.

Since Crane's mind was composed as it was and stored with its particular freight of inherited prejudices, of theories tested by his own unexalted experience, he was incapable now of reacting in any but the one way. He could pity Pauline; but he could not possibly expose himself further. His *safety* demanded that he take a certain course. Had he been constituted of different stuff, Pauline's influence might have wrought its miracle. Hers might have remained a humility that fought for no sordid advantages; her self-abasement might never have veered or grown tarnished. In the end, an achieved happiness might have added its crown to the relation. The power was in her; it was not, however, in the man.

Pauline lifted her head from the pillows. "You want to-day to end it—ah, I know it, I know it," she whispered. "I've caused you enough torment to get away now—that's your wish. I'm tired, terribly tired. Tell me the *truth*. Whatever it is, it will help me. I can sleep—I can be quite reconciled. It's all over? Tell me *that* and then go away."

Crane, realizing that she desired it straight, squared his shoulders and muttered the few sundering words. "We could never go on, Pauline. We've come to the end."

Then, betrayed swiftly and unconsciously into insincerity, he wound up on a note that was to echo with a hollow vibration in his ears for the rest of his life. "There's some good left in me. Dragging you down would be more than even *I* could bear. You're still above me; I have enough strength in me to keep you there in spite of yourself, in spite of *myself*."

Pauline silently let her head drop back on the pillows. For a moment, Crane awaited a sign from her. She gave none; she lay before him now mute, her lips as inscrutably sealed for him as if she had been dead.

He fumbled for the door and let himself out—into a future that even at this moment caused him a shudder, with the sense of its barren stretch of waste. His resilience, the quality in his nature that enabled him to rebound facilely, had been somehow sapped. For once, he would not emerge unchanged from the cloud. He would never awaken with quite the old joy to the discovery of an undimmed radiance about him. Pauline, with her magnificent, sombre eyes, would be ever present, an accusing apparition to haunt him and throw a shadow over his life. Like Dido, she would glide out of the shades and, baring her breast, would show him the gaping wound.

IT'S the qualities overlooked in courtship that make life bearable after marriage.

THE MOUSE

By Robert Merkle

IT was once my good fortune to see a small mouse fulfilling his destiny.

There is a bureau of antiques on a corner of the Rue des Fous. It is an establishment where you can buy, for a song in a very high key, nearly anything once the possession of past generations. There are old clocks and vases, necklaces and chains, inlaid boxes, paperweights, pictures, trinkets, and bric-à-brac from two hundred years ago. The shop is littered with them; the windows are full of them. Many of them ought, by right, to be in forgotten attics, in company with quiet ghosts, heavily sheeted with dust. But they are wilfully exhibited for gain in the shop on the Rue des Fous.

The show-window of this shop is precisely upon the corner, and it is made brighter than day by the municipal gaslight which floods it with a ghastly brilliancy all night long.

On the night which I speak of, there were in this window a huge old clock, much bric-à-brac, some vases, boxes and images, and three swords and a pistol, but particularly the clock, which stood monstrously in the foreground. The window was spick and span as a Dutchman's kitchen. It was brilliant with cleanliness.

As I paused in front of it, I saw a small mouse nervously poking his nose from behind a vase. The gaslight blinded him. He was very timid. Twice he advanced and retreated. But the urge was in him: he knew what it is that a mouse must do. And suddenly, throwing all caution to the dogs, regardless of me and two others who were watching from outside, he pattered out tremulously in the full glare of the gaslight to the antique clock and, after smelling the pedestal, scurried as quick as a wink up one side and down the other; then up that side and down the first; then up the first and down the other—and finally, whisking his tail, retreated into the interior darkness out of which he came.

WHEN a woman ceases to care how she is looking and a man where he is looking, they're dead.

A WOMAN can judge her suitor's love by the degree of affection he displays for her mother.

MEMORANDA OF A MORBID MAN

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

I

ROSE was an exquisite blonde, with apple-blossom cheeks, a scarlet temptation of a mouth, and an exceedingly friendly disposition. Also she listened delightfully.

Whenever we met, she was *en route* to some charming affair, an unpremeditated dance, a quickly arranged gathering of unusual people, or a newly-discovered spot where one could consume rare and illicit beverages. She was always eager that I go along.

One night she urged me to join her gang. We dined on the roof of the Biltmore, and then hastened to an apartment in Central Park West. There we were festive, for the punch was 50 per cent. Portuguese rum and 50 per cent. French champagne. About daybreak we managed to elude the rest of the crowd. I hailed a taxi, and we started homeward.

She was drowsy and caressable, daintily and deliciously snuggly. In the welcome darkness of the cab, I slipped my arm about her. Her head rested comfortably upon my shoulder. I kissed her, and she did not object.

A moment afterward I was about to request an encore of the caress. But a strange sound mingled with the creaking of the taxi. Yes! It was true! Rose had gone to sleep with her head on my shoulder, and the strange sound was a snore!

II

MABEL wrote to me. It was the first note I had ever received from her. Trembling and excited, I tore open the envelope. The note began: "Derest Gawge."

III

STANDING in the lower hall of her home, I waited while the maid gave Hazel her vanity case. Hazel murmured an order to the maid, but I did not catch the words. I was busy contemplating the whiteness of her shoulders, the pale green airiness of her evening gown, the scarlet of her opera cloak. We were about to go to the theatre, and her limousine waited outside.

The maid returned, and gave Hazel a small, ornate, glass bottle. With a brief word of apology, Hazel turned from me. I studiously gazed at the end of my cigarette.

A moment afterward, Hazel looked at me with a glint of mischief in her eyes. Then, with a swift gesture, she emptied the bottle of perfume upon me. The scented liquid was splattered upon my coat, and my waistcoat, and made a smear upon my shirt-front.

"Oh!" she gurgled. "I just wanted to frighten you—!"

IV

LUCILLE finished a note to me with the words, "Yours truly."

V

DORIS came to my apartment without first telephoning to make sure that I was alone.

VI

"COME home with me to dinner tonight," Margaret entreated. "My parents are dining out, the cook has departed in a rage, the maid has eloped, and the chauffeur is drunk. We shall be alone. I am going to show you what a wonderful cook I am! I shall prepare, cook, and serve the meal myself!"

I accepted her invitation. We had tinned soup, canned lobster salad, instantaneous coffee, and a well-advertised brand of ice-cream.

VII

JOSEPHINE sat down before the grand piano and began fingering the keys.

"What shall I play?" she asked.

"Debussey?" I suggested tentatively.

"No . . ." doubtfully. "I haven't anything. . . ."

"Bach? Rachmaninoff? Strauss?"

"I'm a little out of practice. . . ."

"Something calm and soothing," I murmured. "One of Chopin's waltzes? Something by Nevin? Or—"

"Nothing seems to come to my mind," she mildly complained.

"Some jazz!" I said hopefully. "Some jazz to make my joints jingle, Josephine!" I entreated.

She began to play. Slowly, mournfully, without glee or gusto, she played "Brighten the Corner Where You Are."

VIII

DRUCILLA said, "I confide everything to my mother."

I did not believe her.

This was my mistake.

IX

NORMA said that she played tennis, golf, and bridge. We tried to play tennis, and she squealed each time her racquet hit the ball. We attempted golf, and she broke my favourite driving iron. We essayed bridge, and she insisted that the nine was higher than the king.

X

WHEN Cora appeared upon the beach, a crowd gathered. A clergyman was killed in the crush. Three elderly gentlemen walked in the surf as far as their knees. Her bathing costume was patterned after one seen in a moving picture comedy.

She agreed to meet me in the grill-room of the hotel. She did. When I last saw her she was wearing a green hat with large yellow feathers on it, an orange and heliotrope dress, and pink shoes with gilt heels.

FOOT-NOTE

By Sam Hellman

IT was while she was talking to him of Spencer, neo-futurism, Freud, and relativity, that he became aware of the shapeliness of her ankles.

CAPTAIN VALYA

By C. E. Bechhofer

I

SHE was really an absurd creature. She cannot have been much more than sixteen or seventeen, and her face was that of a child. The huge hat of white fur that she wore seemed as big as she was. Her childish figure, too, seemed out of place in the rough uniform she was wearing; had it not been for the sinister bandage on her right hand, I should have taken her for a schoolgirl dressed up for amateur theatricals. That is to say, if amateur theatricals were even remotely possible in agonized Russia to-day. She had an appealing smile, in which there was mingled with the gay and childlike an undercurrent of sorrow that made me wonder what terrible things the last few years had brought into her life.

I first met Valya near Ekaterinodar. We had been sent up the railway line from Novorossisk with orders to attempt to penetrate into Rostov as soon as the anti-Bolshevist forces recaptured it, an event which was expected every day. It was bitterly cold, and the covered truck in which we were travelling was too dilapidated to be much affected by the heat of the improvised stove in the centre.

When, therefore, we stopped dead with a fearful jerk in the first light of the morning, I was not sorry to throw off my blankets, the top one of which was frozen as hard as a board, open the door of the truck and jump out into the snow at the side of the track. To my amazement, our truck was all alone on a remote siding, except for a similar truck against which we had been so violently thrown. Rapidly retreating in the distance, past the wayside station, was the rear of the train to which we had been attached. We were marooned, God only knew where!

I was staring round, amazed and extremely annoyed, when the door of the other truck opened and a queer figure clambered through it. It was a Russian officer—I could tell that by the uniform—and a captain, as the epaulettes showed. The officer's arm was in a sling, and a bandaged hand protruded. What was strange about the figure was its diminutive size and the strangely young face.

We made a step toward one another, and suddenly I realized whom I was encountering. It was one of General Denikin's women officers!

We shook hands, smiling, and I explained, so far as I myself understood it, what had happened to us and why we had bumped so unceremoniously into her truck. I asked her where we were, and she mentioned the name of a station some distance north of Ekaterinodar.

"I suppose," I said, "they have made a mistake and left our truck behind here instead of another one. It won't be the first time this has happened to us."

Then I asked her how long she had been there.

"Oh, a long time," she answered. "Ever such a long time."

Then:

"Are you a doctor?" she asked me abruptly.

I glanced at her wounded arm.

"Oh, it's not for me that I'm asking," she said hastily, "it's for Katya."

"Katya?"

"She's my friend. She's in the truck, very ill. I've been nursing her for days. She's in the Markov Regiment, and I'm in the Alexeiev Regiment, but we were both at the front together, and we're good comrades."

"Well," I said, "you are lucky. I'm not a doctor, but as it happens, my companion in the truck is a doctor."

"An English doctor?"

"Yes, an English doctor."

"Bravo! Bravo! Thank God! Cheerio!" cried the little creature. (This is as close as I can render in English her absurd exclamations.) And she capered joyfully through the snow back to her truck.

I climbed into our truck, and explained to Capper what had happened to us and whom I had met.

Capper was amused and said he would go and have a look at Katya after breakfast. Then we remembered that we had neither food nor tea in our truck. All our stores were with our servants in the train from which we had somehow become detached. We looked at each other glumly for a moment.

"I think I'll pay my professional visit at once," said Capper.

We walked along to the other truck. Valya welcomed us joyfully and showed us her friend lying on an untidy heap of rags in a corner. Capper took the invalid's wrist, and asked her a few questions, which I translated as well as I could.

Valya all the time stood by with a look of anguish and anxiety. Once she tried to approach her companion, but was repelled with a rough gesture by the elder girl. It was easy to see how the land lay. Valya was passionately attached to Katya, but the latter was only bored by her affection. Despite her illness one could see that Katya was an imperious and coquettish person, far more sophisticated than her friend.

We did not need to ask questions to see that they had no breakfast to offer us. Their truck was bare of food, except for a few crusts mouldering in a dirty corner.

I left Capper with them and trudged off to the distant station. An astonished stationmaster rated his assistant for detaching us from the train, and they both wondered gloomily what would happen when the Russian general, whose truck ought to have been shunted, returned from his involuntary journey up the line. I managed to buy a few rolls and a small and nasty chicken. When I got back to the girls' truck I found Capper examining their wounds.

"Would you believe it, Smith," he cried when he saw me, "this child has been wounded seven times!"

Valya, who guessed what he was talking about, raised seven fingers delightedly.

"Cheerio! Seven times! What a go! Cheerio!" she cried.

Then she became very serious. "Ask him what's the matter with Katya."

At Capper's dictation, I explained to Valya that it was impossible to say yet whether Katya had typhus or not. In any case she had a high fever and needed good looking after. The sooner she could be got down to Ekaterinodar, where there was at any rate a minimum of medical arrangements, the better chance she would have in the event of the dread but almost universal disease appearing.

After breakfast, which, for the convenience of the invalid, we ate in their truck, Valya and I walked over to the station, and, presuming on our joint authority, we arranged that the girls' truck should be hooked on to the next train going down the line, and ours on the next up train. There were still a few hours before we parted. Valya insisted upon our staying in her truck, where she hoped that our presence might help to divert the invalid, on whom, moreover, she could thus keep constant watch. She showed me her wounds without the slightest embarrassment, and we parted on the best of terms.

I never saw her again. But I heard about her from one or two chance

sources afterward. This was curious, because in Russia in those days once you lost sight of anyone you, as a rule, never heard of them again. As far as I could piece together the several accounts I heard, this is what happened to Valya after we kissed her good-bye on that lonely siding:

II

THE two girls returned to Ekaterinodar that day, and Katya, already much weaker, was taken off to the hospital. It soon became evident that she had typhus.

The day after, Valya called at the hospital, intending to stay there and nurse her friend, but a doctor came out to her and told her sternly that under no circumstances was she to enter the place. The confusion, he said, was already great enough without the presence of amateur nurses to complicate it. So Valya, very crestfallen, went off back to the railway station. She found her truck after a search—it had been shunted all over the place—but it was now on the same siding as was a troop train under orders to proceed up the line again.

Valya thought matters over for a while. It would be weeks and weeks before Katya was well and about again, even if she did eventually get well. What was Valya to do in the meanwhile? Her latest wound in the hand was a sufficient reason for remaining where she was, and the disorganization of the Volunteer Army after the fall of Rostov was such that nobody at Headquarters was likely to have any useful work to give her. Besides, she had had enough experience of the staff to have the instinctive feeling that the further she kept away from it the better for everyone. She thought for a long time, but could come to no decision.

About midday she realized that she was very hungry, and she climbed out of the truck into the filth of the big station-yard at Ekaterinodar, and, like the sparrow she resembled, she looked round for the best place to get food. It was so long since she had received her army pay that she had become almost expert in food-hunting. The troop train on the same siding immediately attracted her attention, and off she went to the officers' truck. In it she found a handsome young captain, to whom she introduced herself as Captain Valya ———, of the Alexeiev Regiment. His good looks, his dark eyes and black moustache, took Valya's heart by storm. Even her customary audacity deserted her, and for a few minutes she forgot her eternal refrain of "Cheerio! Bravo! What a go! Nichevo!"

Kapelnikov—that was the officer's name—gave her some food, and, amused by the absurd young creature's vivacity, entered into a conversation with her, flattering her by using the tones and words of serious military conversation.

By the evening Valya was completely captivated. When she found out that Kapelnikov and his men were going up to the front the next day, she begged to be taken with them. The result was that Kapelnikov's orderly went along and cleaned out Valya's truck and moved his master's scanty kit into it as well. And in the middle of the night the troop-train, with Valya's truck at the rear, moved out northwards.

Kapelnikov had been a young subaltern in a Guard Regiment at the outbreak of the war with Germany. Wounded on the Russian front, he had afterward been transferred to the Caucasus. When the Russian armies broke up in 1917, he made his way, disguised as a soldier, to the house of a relative at Rostov. Here he had been mobilized by General Kornilov when the latter commenced his heroic campaign in the Kuban Steppe against the Bolshevists. Ever since, Kapelnikov had been in the anti-Bolshevist forces; and, like all the others, he was war-weary, dull, and miserable. He saw his life slipping away from him.

From other countries came news of peace celebrations and a gradual settling down to peace-time conditions. Only poor agonized Russia was still fighting, fighting. And in the worst of all wars —civil war. And he was a part of agonized Russia; he was an aching

nerve in that huge pain-distorted body! Now once again he had been ordered to the front. Once again he was to face shot and shell, and, worse still, the terrible scourge of frost and disease. It was no wonder that the coming of Valya pleased him. It was like a sparrow coming to play in a prisoner's cell.

A week or so after, they received orders to leave their train and march to a village a few score miles away from the railway.

The discomfort of that march is not to be told. The steppe was covered with thawing snow. You could not distinguish the road from the rest of that dirty, muddy, gray-coloured plain. Their carts stuck in the mud for hours. The men, all weary to death of the campaign, were sullen and miserable.

Kapelnikov, trudging through the knee-deep slime, thought of pre-war days and fell into a sulky silence. Only Valya was imperturbable. She was perhaps more unfortunate than any of the others; her hand had not been dressed for days, and this added to the other discomforts of the march. But she never complained. On the contrary, her gurgling laugh and her silly little exclamations never ceased. The soldiers alternately cursed and admired her.

They reached the Cossack village at last. There was the usual long street, along which wooden houses and huts straggled. There was the usual church at one end of the village. There was the usual mud. The roads were practically impassable; the only way to get from one house to another was by the greasy boards that were laid along the side.

Everything was in terrible disrepair. The peasants were in rags. Communication with the towns had practically ceased as a result of the unsettled state of the country. Everyone was sullen and unfriendly.

Kapelnikov sent for the headman of the village, produced his authority, and ordered him to provide quarters and provisions for the company. The headman as usual declared that there was neither accommodation nor food in the village, and was only brought to reason by Kapelnikov's threat to requisition both by force. With a poor grace a few dilapidated huts were pointed out for the accommodation of the soldiers and two rooms in the best house in the place were reserved for Kapelnikov and Valya.

The headman did not seem to know or care where the advancing Bolshevists were. He cursed both them and the Volunteers with equal disgust, and ejaculated his yearning for the return of the good old times, when men could live their own lives in peace and comparative comfort.

Kapelnikov sent out a few scouts and set on others of his men to pump the villagers for information. He got very little. The only thing of which he became assured was that Bolshevist agents were at work in the village, inciting the men to desert to the advancing forces. Kapelnikov shrugged his shoulders when this news was brought to him by one of his agents, who, however, pretended not to know who the agents were or where they lodged.

Desertion, desertion, desertion! It was the old tale. Men deserted to the Bolshevists to-day, deserted back to the Volunteers to-morrow; next week they would be back in the Bolshevist ranks, and before long you would see them again among the anti-Bolshevists. All Russia was demoralized, worn out, exhausted in body and in mind. The look in men's eyes showed only what was bad in their nature; the good was drowned beneath the miseries of their lot.

Kapelnikov laughed angrily when he thought, as he sometimes did, of the hopes and ambition with which he had started his career. This was what he had come to—the command of a ragged and semi-mutinous company in the dirtiest and most miserable locality he had ever seen, and his only companion Valya, a bedraggled little camp-follower!

Valya was quite happy. She scandalized the old men and women of the village by her clothes and her conversation. Some of the old women crossed themselves at the very sight of her.

They insulted her to her face, but she merely grinned and cried, "Bravo! Bravo! Cheerio!" and left them stupefied with astonishment.

And so Kapelnikov and his men and Valya passed day after day in that desolate village in the steppe.

III

One day news arrived that the Bolshevist cavalry was coming closer. At the same time Kapelnikov heard that Rostov had been retaken by the Volunteers. Both pieces of information were true, as it happened. The Volunteers did retake Rostov for one day in February, 1920, but next day they were outflanked and had to withdraw.

Meanwhile the villagers, ever anxious to choose the more powerful side, became more and more hostile to the Volunteers. Kapelnikov's own men were getting out of hand. One night he was awakened by his only reliable spy, who had taken advantage of the darkness to come and warn him that the men had decided to go over in a body to the Bolshevists, whose cavalry were now said to be not more than two days' march away. They had decided, the man said, to arrest Kapelnikov the following night and to win the confidence of the Bolshevists by handing over to them him and Valya, a still more valuable prize. Valya came into the room during their talk and overheard most of it. When the man crept away cautiously, Kapelnikov and she began to consider what they should do.

Valya alone had a plan; Kapelnikov was too exhausted mentally to be able to propose anything. Valya suggested that they should leave their quarters at once, and make for a deserted hut she had discovered in a copse outside the village. Here they could hide for a few days until the position cleared up, and then perhaps they would be able to get through to the railway; if necessary by a roundabout route through the Bolshevist lines.

Kapelnikov realized that it would be foolish of them to attempt to get through to the railway now. As soon as they were missed, his mutinous troops would at once pursue them across the steppe to the railway. They might not even succeed in getting out of the village. In any case, Valya's plan would gain them a few days' respite.

They filled their pockets with scraps of bread and meat and slipped out by the back of the house. Valya knew the way to the deserted hut, and Kapelnikov let her guide him.

They did not make the mistake of going directly towards their hiding-place, lest someone should see them and tell their men on the morrow. Indeed, they made such a wide sweep round the village that it was almost dawn by the time that, exhausted and filthy, they reached the tumble-down barn where they were to hide.

The place was well chosen. From the outside it looked too ruined for even a beast to take refuge in it. A few mouldering trees made a partial screen for the entrance, and it was so far from the main village and so remote from the other huts that the fugitives would easily be able to leave it without attracting attention. The roof of the hut had long since fallen in. The walls had nearly all crumbled away. But in one angle there was a recess, hardly bigger than a dog-kennel, which Valya's eye selected for their hiding-place.

The hole was slimy and full of rotting leaves and mud. It was cold, wet, and miserable. But it was at least half-sheltered from the snow and rain, and a little better than the open steppe.

Even Valya's good spirits almost deserted her when the struggling light revealed the horrors of the place. Kapelnikov was beyond caring; he was utterly weary of the whole business. They crowded into their kennel and ate one or two of the dirty crusts they had brought with them. Then with an effort Valya cried, "What a go! Cheerio!" But Kapelnikov did not smile, and she became silent.

She shouted with glee, however, about midday when the noise of cries

and revolver shots in the village showed that their escape had been discovered. She soon had the pleasure of seeing half a dozen soldiers and villagers start off in the direction of the railway. It was the search-party.

During the day they dared not leave their foul refuge. Only when darkness had fallen, they stretched their cramped limbs for a few minutes among the rotting trees.

The next day the advance guards of the Bolshevist cavalry entered the village, men as weary and ill-equipped as their opponents. The headman came out to meet them, with one of Kapelnikov's sergeants; and both declared their good-will and allegiance. The Bolshevist troops disappeared into the village, and requisitioned more quarters and more food from the villagers. Next day the main body of the force arrived, with a Commissar in charge, and Kapelnikov, who had found an admirable spy-hole in the hollow trunk of one of the trees, looked on ironically through his binoculars as the Commissar deposed the headman from his position and put one of the paupers of the village in his place.

The villagers went about their daily business as listlessly and sullenly as ever. The arrival of the Bolshevists was to them only another phase of their misery.

For the next few days nothing changed. The search-party came back empty-handed, deciding that the two fugitives must have succeeded in reaching the railway with extraordinary speed. Anyhow, no search was made for them in the vicinity of the village. After all, there seemed to be nowhere for them to hide; no one thought of the derelict barn.

But the position of Valya and Kapelnikov was unenviable. Their crusts were almost exhausted. They had not eaten more than two or three mouthfuls a day, but even so nearly all the bread was gone. They had nothing to drink except the brackish and dirty pools of melted snow. They were indescribably filthy. Kapelnikov was sullen and silent. Poor Valya could scarcely ejaculate a "Nichevo! Cheerio!" from her little swollen mouth. Her bandaged arm was causing her excruciating pain. Her moaning annoyed Kapelnikov, although he knew she was doing her best to keep it back; indeed, it was only in the half-dazed moods that took the place of sleep that the pain obtained mastery over her.

One night Valya woke from one of these lapses of consciousness and found herself alone. She crawled out of the kennel and called softly for Kapelnikov. There was no answer.

She searched for him a little while among the decayed trees, and then returned to the shelter. It was only after a couple of hours or more that Kapelnikov returned. He was reeling with weariness. Valya looked at him curiously, but decided that questions would only provoke his anger, and decided to be silent.

When morning came, she took their last crust out of her pocket and gave it to him. He broke it in two, gave her half, and ravenously devoured his portion. When he had finished, he looked hungrily at her share, which she held untouched in her unbandaged hand. Without a word Valya handed it to him.

He stared at her with a strange look in which greed struggled with astonishment. She pointed to her swollen gums as if to say that eating was impossible for her, and then she characteristically poked out her tongue at him. He ate the bread, and Valya turned away, covering her face with her arm so as not to see him eating the food she coveted. Her teeth bit into her thin flesh, and tears rolled down her face. But Kapelnikov neither saw nor cared.

Again that night she found herself alone. This time he did not return. She waited anxiously, until at last it began to grow light.

Valya was terrified lest Kapelnikov was out walking in the neighbourhood of their refuge, and someone from the village should see him before he got back to safety. The pain from her arm was intolerable, and she craved for food.

She dozed off in a semi-delirium. When she woke again, it was broad daylight. To her horror she heard voices. She recognized Kapelnikov's among them. What were they saying?

Kapelnikov was speaking. His voice was slow and uneven.

"This is the place," he was saying.

Horror turned Valya to stone.

She began to crawl clumsily from under the rotting beams that composed the roof of their shelter.

"This is the place," Kapelnikov's weak voice went on. "Now give me some bread."

"Not yet, friend," answered a loud voice. "Finish your side of the bargain first."

Valya scrambled to her feet outside the shelter just as Kapelnikov led the Bolshevist Commissar and his bodyguard toward it.

"Aha, there she is!" said the Commissar, as Valya's tottering figure rose before them. "Here's your bread, Captain Judas!" And Kapelnikov, not daring to look at Valya, took the loaf that was held out to him and buried his teeth in it.

Valya swayed for a few moments, trying to get her balance.

The treachery of Kapelnikov penetrated her mind; her face was distorted like a crying baby's. The Commissar made a step towards her. Hastily she thrust her hand into her pocket.

"Look out!" shouted the Commissar, "she's armed."

"Cheerio!" cried Valya, with an echo of her old voice. "Yes, I'm armed. Stand back!" she cried, as the Commissar made another step, and she pointed the revolver at him.

He stopped, undecided.

Kapelnikov was still gnawing the bread, which he held in both his hands. He dared not look in her direction.

Suddenly the Commissar and two or three of his men advanced upon her.

"Stand back!" she cried again, and stopped them with a gesture of her revolver, which trembled in her weak left hand.

Then with a cracked laugh, she cried shrilly, "Cheerio! Bravo! Nichevo! What a go!" and turned the revolver toward herself. Waiting until the shaking barrel touched her head, she fired, and fell to the ground like a little bedraggled sparrow.

Kapelnikov went on eating the bread.

THE BIRCH

By Oscar Williams

THE vivid-white birch in the sunlight
Is a poised fountain of silver
Breaking into a foam of green,
Rippling down in gold-green showers
Over my heart.

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

By John Hamilton

WE were dancing. From the garden came the scent of acacia trees abloom, and through the window peered a shaft of moonlight. I felt her soft and yielding in my arms and caught the fragrance of her hair as she pressed against me.

A strange look came upon her face. It was passionate, terrified, cynical, agonized, infuriated, sensual, carnal, fervent. . . .

"Dearest!" I cried in ecstasy, drawing her closely to me.

"You stepped on my toe!" she wailed.

STUPIDITY

By Helen Trask

I

A WOMAN took into her house a servant of shifting glance who was without references.

One day her pearls were gone.

II

A GARDEN-BOY wished to give his sweetheart a full-blown rose.

In wrath he clipped off a delicate pink bud with his shears because it had not bloomed overnight.

III

A BEAUTIFUL woman whose youth was departing invited a young girl to her home.

Her husband saw the young girl.

THE GOOD CHANCE

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

MISS GREGSON was all dressed for dinner with the Howards. She looked at herself in the mirror of her small dressing-table and smiled timidly at the reflection. She was not vain, but she did so want to look well. It really was important.

She had done over her hair three separate times and, although the finished result was exactly what she generally attained with a tenth of the effort, she thought perhaps it did look a little better. Miss Gregson's hair was thin and of a lustreless brown and you could see a few gray hairs if you looked closely. She had shampooed it that morning with a henna preparation which had promised, in elegant Old English lettering on the container, to give "a wonderful red and gold gleam and the effect of natural fluffiness—"

Miss Gregson wanted to believe that the shampoo had fulfilled all of the promises to the last sentence of the five paragraphs devoted to its certain results. First, she had arranged her hair as always, parted a trifle to one side and rolled slightly over her ears. But she had tried to give an added impression of girlishness by pulling out the puffs a little and by flattening her hair, by means of invisible hairpins, over her forehead, which was too white and too high and even, perhaps, a trifle knobby.

To her hair she added, now, as a final triumph, a high back-comb, once the property of her Aunt May. It had contained several rows of brilliants, part of which were missing, but it was of the shape commonly designated as "Spanish," and Miss Gregson thought it added a needed touch of gaiety, almost of coquetry, to her costume.

She straightened the collar of her dress and pulled slightly at the shoulders and the sleeves. She rather believed it was becoming. It was her best dress and she thought it quite appropriate for this affair. It was going to be just "a home dinner," but Miss Gregson was not accustomed to more formal dining. The dress was of non-dust-showing tan silk with thin sleeves. It was a "bought-ready-made" and had come from one of the lesser department stores which offer moderate prices in lieu of exclusiveness.

Miss Gregson and her mother, guided by the pins that the store's fitter had inserted free of charge, had adjusted the hem themselves, thus saving two dollars. But to gain a glory quite impossible of realization in a "ready-made," Miss Gregson had added a "different touch" by replacing the flimsy collar which had been on the dress when she bought it with one she thought was "real lace." It had been in the family for over forty years, had, in fact, been a gift to Mrs. Gregson from her mother as a part of her trousseau. Miss Gregson belonged to that large class of gentlefolk which believes that everything that is old is good and which cherishes innumerable useless things, an accumulation of left-overs from departed and quite frequently tasteless relatives.

Miss Gregson added a fleck more powder to her nose, rubbing most of it off with her clean handkerchief, touched her eyebrows and the lobes of her ears with toilet water—a touch she thought quite dainty—and looked at her watch, which she wore as always on a neat

black ribbon around her neck and tucked into her belt.

It was time to go. She put on her small neat toque carefully, so as not to muss her hair, put on her coat, though the day was quite warm, taking care that the lace collar of her frock lay under it, unwrinkled. It seemed so indelicate to go out on the street coatless, especially in the evening. She looked into her neat, black purse to see if she had everything, car-fare, powder-puff and key. Miss Gregson's purse contained no frivolous silver or enamelled toilet things nor unnecessary feminine trifles, save a few unneeded dress-goods samples she had accumulated a few weeks before, the card of a woman who had waited on her for blouses, and the new address of an old acquaintance.

All ready, white gloves held gingerly with her purse, she went into the living-room, where her mother sat reading.

"I'm all ready; guess I'll go, mother," she said.

"What time is it?"

"After six, and they eat at seven. And so many times the traffic holds things up. I'm going to take a bus."

"Yes, I would. It's only a nickel more and it's a nice ride"

"Mother, you'd better eat something right away. You know you always get a headache if you wait too long. There's that nice cold meat in the ice-box and two tomatoes and some lettuce for salad. You will, won't you?"

"Don't start worrying about me. I'll get along all right. Who's going to be there besides the Howards?"

"Only the Greenes, you know—Lillian Mullin—and, I think a friend of Fred Howard's, six, that's all."

"Have a good time. Will they bring you home?"

"I suppose someone will. I can come home alone if he—if they don't. It's only a block to walk on each side of the bus."

"Yes, that's right. Only be careful. You know the awful things you're always reading about people out alone at night—and a girl out all alone."

"I'll be careful. It isn't as if I were really a young girl, you know. There's nothing to worry about. Now do eat something right away."

"I will. Have a good time."

"All right. Good-bye, mother."

"Good-bye, dear."

II

Miss Gregson left the house, closing the door carefully after her. She knew how her mother jumped if a door slammed. She hadn't told her mother how excited she was about dinner at the Howards nor why. Miss Gregson didn't tell her mother things like that, though in the past there had been nothing quite similar to tell. Mrs. Gregson was getting old and liked to talk mostly of when she was young and how things were changing these days, and not for the better.

Miss Gregson was thirty-four. She and her mother lived alone in the first-floor apartment of a decent brown-stone house in the West Nineties. They owned the house. The second and third floors of it formed two more apartments, the rents from which, after the upkeep and interest on the mortgage were subtracted, formed, with the addition of a small revenue derived from shares of stock, the entire income of Mrs. and Miss Gregson.

The income was lessened each year, for the Gregsons occasionally found it necessary to sell a share or two of the stock in order to pay necessary current expenses. But they had been able to raise the rents on the apartments, not, of course, enough to make them guilty of profiteering, they felt, but sufficient to make possible a decent and frugal livelihood.

Miss Gregson's father had died when she was twenty. Her one brother had died two years later. Neither she nor her mother approved of young women entering the business world, and, besides, her education at a semi-fashionable finishing school had not provided her with any adequate vocation and she had no talents of any kind. She had never had a suitor. In fact she had

lacked all masculine attention. While her brother was alive he brought friends home with him occasionally, but they had never paid the slightest attention to her. And after his death none of them continued to call. Dora Gregson spoke pleasantly to the butcher and the grocer's clerk and the ice man. Occasionally a salesman in a department store waited on her. She talked, impersonally, to the husbands of the women she knew. Outside of these times she never spoke to a man at all.

That is why she was so excited. She was not only going to meet a man, but the man was, from Natalie's account of him, "a good chance." Mrs. Howard, when she was Natalie Barker, had been one of Dora's best friends, from the days when they had attended Miss Rhodes' School. Both had been quiet and retiring and old-maidish even then.

Until three years before, until after she was thirty, Natalie had been as devoid of masculine attendants as Dora. Then she had met—through a cousin of her mother—Fred Howard, a thin, sallow-faced man of most moderate circumstances, whose wife had died a few years before.

Howard liked to come home to a home-cooked meal, to find his socks, properly assorted and darned, waiting for him in neat balls in his drawer, to sit near his library table and read his paper at night with a wife on the other side of the table. So he and Natalie had married. Now, quite far out, on Washington Heights, you can get an awfully good view of the Hudson from two rooms of their apartment on a clear day. . . . Amid new and glossy mahogany furniture the Howards were enjoying a comfortable domesticity.

Of course, as soon as Natalie married, she saw the necessity of Dora Gregson following her as quickly as possible into matrimony. Feeling that marriage proved beyond any possible argument that she possessed pronounced feminine charm, she adopted a pretty, matronly, patronizing air with Dora.

"Just wait," she would say. "Mr. Right will come along yet, when you least expect him. I'm going to have my eyes open for him, too. You can't tell. I'll sort of hint to Fred. He knows so many men. He may know just the man for you. You'll have a good chance some time."

But Fred's acquaintances, it seemed, did not include a sprightly and comfortably fixed bachelor or widower who was bent on marrying a pleasant, if slightly prim and attenuated "girl" of thirty-something. Fred spent most of his evenings at home. The seed business did not offer extensive social possibilities.

Six months ago, however, when Natalie had telephoned to Dora to arrange a shopping trip, she had said that she had "perfectly wonderful news to tell you when I see you." The perfectly wonderful news had been Dora's first knowledge of the existence of Alger Bowes and a hint as to his marital possibilities.

"I haven't met him," said Natalie, "but Fred says he is a perfectly wonderful man, an awfully good chance. Fred says—you know how silly a man can be—that he doesn't want me to meet him because he'd be jealous, he's so good-looking. But of course he doesn't mean that. Mr. Bowes has been a friend of Fred's for years and years—just as we've been friends for years and years. Wouldn't it be romantic? But Mr. Bowes has been travelling for a shoe firm and has been in and out of New York all the time, so Fred hasn't seen much of him lately. Well, Tuesday he met Bowes at the What Will You Have Lunch Room; it's one of those places where you get a tray and go around picking out your own dishes. Fred likes to eat there because he can get just the things he wants; you know he suffers from indigestion and has to be awfully careful, unless he eats at home, when I can give him just what he wants.

"Well, he'd just got his tray over to his table and started putting it down when he heard a voice say, 'Well, if it

isn't Fred Howard!' and there was Alger Bowes. They had lunch together, and Fred says Bowes looks simply fine; he's a little fleshier than he was and it's awfully becoming, Fred says. Well, Bowes wants to get off the road and settle down—wouldn't you hate to be a drummer and travel from one town to another nine months in the year?—though there is a lot of money in it, Fred says.

"Well, Bowes said by the first of the year he was going to locate in New York permanently, as assistant to the sales manager, an awfully good position. And Fred said to him, offhand, as if it didn't mean anything, but thinking of what he'd promised me about you, all the time, 'Not married yet, are you?' and Bowes said, 'Not yet, but after I get settled in New York I may look around a bit. I wouldn't mind a home of my own.' 'Greatest thing on earth,' Fred said he told him, and I guess he did, because you know how domestic Fred is. Then Fred said: 'Well, when you get settled, you let me know. My wife knows some dandy girls she'll be glad to introduce you to' and Bowes said that was fine, right-o."

That had been all of the news from Alger Bowes for a while, but it was enough to give Dora a pleasantly warm feeling whenever she thought of it. Life was no longer just a colourless attempt to make an inadequate income provide the most evident necessities and a few genteel comforts as well. Alger Bowes threw a glow over everything.

Natalie had first mentioned Bowes in December. But, contrary to expectations, Bowes did not leave "the road" in January as he had expected. Fred called at his office to find out and was told that Bowes was making a final circuit of his territory with the man who was ultimately to take his place.

Dora did not like business. She tried to believe that she had sprung from a stock wherein all of the masculine element were "professional people." She would have preferred marrying a doctor or a lawyer. But the family lawyer was an old man and married, and she had never met any other lawyer—and the family doctor, though single, was old and had such elegant bedside manners that Dora had never been able to pierce through them. Bowes, after all, would have an important position, nearly a profession. To say nothing of the splendid income Fred had told Natalie he made.

As the months passed, Natalie brought delicious bits of news about Bowes. In April, Fred had telephoned to his office again and a week or so later Bowes had dropped in to see Fred and they had had lunch together again. And Bowes had said he was awfully anxious to meet Fred's wife—and some of her friends, too. But he was just in town for a week or ten days now, awfully busy. He'd be back in another month, to stay this time, and he'd let Fred know as soon as he returned. Yes, he'd be delighted to come out to the house for dinner.

In May, Fred had an illustrated postcard from Bowes from San Antonio, Texas, with "Will be back in town soon. Best regards to Mrs. Howard," written below the picture of a bank building.

Natalie brought the card for Dora to see. The reference to "Mrs. Howard" made it seem personal, as if Bowes was definitely considering the conjugal state and a "Mrs." of his own.

Then, just a few weeks ago, Natalie had telephoned to Dora to tell her that Bowes was in town, that Fred had seen him, that he had promised to come out to dinner the very first chance he had, and that he was quite, yes, enthusiastically, willing to meet Miss Gregson, Mrs. Howard's best girl friend, of whom he had heard so much.

So Dora was going to meet Alger Bowes this very evening at seven. A rich bachelor who thought favourably of matrimony—a good chance!

Natalie had invited her, over the telephone, definitely, a week ago, after another chance encounter of Fred and Bowes, when Bowes had accepted Fred's dinner invitation Natalie had

repeated the invitation in person the very next day, when she had called to explain the details to Dora. She had invited, too, Mr. and Mrs. Green. Lillian Green, *née* Mullin, was a cousin of Natalie, a pleasant enough, colourless person, a few years her junior. Ray Green was a pleasant enough fellow, and colourless, too. Having an extra couple would take away the effect of giving the dinner just so Dora and Bowes could get acquainted. It would make it almost a dinner party.

"I'm going to have Mrs. Wort to serve and do the dishes," Natalie went on. "You know, the woman who cleans for me; she's really very good. Of course I'll do the cooking myself. No, indeed, I wouldn't hear of your helping. I want you to look nice and —and fresh. Oh, it won't make any difference the way I look—an old married woman like me, though Fred seems to like me, no matter what I wear."

III

Dora caught a Fifth Avenue bus at the corner. She wasn't used to being out at all in the evening, especially not alone, so she was glad it was still light.

She found a seat on top and sat next to a thin old man who tried to read a newspaper in spite of the jolting of the bus. She was glad she was seated next to an old man. Sometimes she imagined, when she sat next to young men, on cars and buses and at the theatre, that they jogged her elbow or sat too close to her. This didn't worry her exactly, but she found it rather unpleasant. The old man was safe enough.

How pleasant Riverside Drive looked! She knew it was considered rather newly rich to live on Riverside, but she liked the sound of the name. It would be awfully nice, in a shop, if she ordered anything, "Send it to Mrs. Alger Bowes, please, five hundred and something Riverside Drive."

Being married would be awfully pleasant. There were so many disadvantages in being single. Even now, when she ordered things, she sometimes gave her mother's name instead of her own, so as to let the salespeople think she was married. Married, with a little apartment of her own! A new apartment with new furniture — of course she'd keep some of the best things, the old mahogany, good things like that—and have a new white kitchen and a really good maid and nice things to wear and no worries about money. Natalie would probably be jealous of her, if she had better things. Though, of course, Natalie would never forget that she had made the match. That, even, might keep her from being jealous.

The bus jerked its way uptown. She was going to meet Alger Bowes! Would they like each other, at first sight? She did hope Natalie and Fred wouldn't say anything silly or embarrassing. Of course, the Greens wouldn't suspect anything, would be glad enough to be invited for dinner.

Alger Bowes! Was he good-looking, she wondered. She would treat him, of course, as if he were just an ordinary acquaintance, but if he took for granted, right from the start, that they were—that it was all arranged—of course she couldn't do anything about that. Here she was, Dora Gregson, on her way to meet a man who had heard all about her and wanted to meet her. It all seemed strange and foreign and exciting.

She got off the bus at the right corner. In a doorway she added another touch of powder to her face, put on the white gloves and hurried to the Howard apartment. She wondered if she was late—her watch said fifteen minutes of seven—if Bowes had already arrived.

She rang the bell. Natalie, a big blue and white apron concealing her blue Georgette dress, greeted her.

"I'm so glad you got here before the Greens," she bubbled. "It's fine you came early. Put your hat and coat in my room on the bed. How do you like this bed-spread? Fred's sister in Michigan sent it to me. It's every stitch hand-made. Awfully pretty, isn't

it? Oh, you'll be thinking about bedspreads, things like that, before long. Oh—he hasn't come yet. He's going by the office and come home with Fred; it's easier for him than finding the way alone. They'll be here any minute, now. I do hope you two take to each other. It's such a good chance. Fred says that—"

In the kitchen Natalie gave final instructions to Mrs. Wort, arranged a salad of lettuce, cucumbers and tomatoes and put the salad plates into the ice-box.

"Thank heavens I'm through," said Natalie. "I don't mind working hard before company comes, but after folks get here I always say I want to 'play lady.' Fred doesn't like to see me work hard, either. He says I do too much now. He'd get me a maid in a minute if I asked him, but with so many expenses. . . . Let's go in my room until the others come."

Natalie took off her apron and smoothed her hair and talked. Dora answered mechanically. She was worried just a little. She had pictured Bowes here already, safely and eagerly waiting for her. He hadn't arrived. What if he didn't come at all? What if—

The bell rang.

Dora waited in Natalie's room and heard Natalie answer the door.

It was the Greens. Lillian was twittering as usual in her high monotone; Ray was a bit too pleasant, the jolliness of a man about to be given a free dinner.

Natalie and Lillian came into the bedroom. Lillian kissed Dora and purred something about "wanting to come to see you for a long time, but you know how long it takes to get to any place in New York. How is your dear mother? Isn't that splendid? Ray always says that he wishes we had a mother to live with us and cook real home dishes. I'm afraid I'm not really domestic. I simply can't learn to cook very well, though I try and try. I'm always sending in coupons for free cook books. Ray sometimes says—"

The Greens were there. It was after seven. What if Bowes—

There was a fumbling at the front door. The door opened. Masculine voices were heard. Natalie ran to the door. Dora heard Fred's voice introducing "my friend, Alger Bowes, Alger, my wife," Natalie's voice, cordial and exaggeratedly girlish, and Bowes' voice, comfortably deep and masculine. He had come! Would she be waiting, soon, evenings, for the sound of that voice? Of course it was ridiculous to think of that, really, but, if . . .

"Come on in the living-room, girls," said Natalie at the door. "I want you to meet Fred's friend."

They were in the tan-papered living-room, the glittering and too large pieces of mahogany stiffly arranged in the small cubicle. Dora was greeting Fred, and Ray Green was shaking hands with Bowes!

He was a little fatter than she had expected, quite fat, in fact, and a bit red-faced, his nose slightly flattened at the end. Still, weren't fat men always considered good-natured? He wasn't at all bad-looking. Of course not. His hair was quite thin and straight and was parted in the centre and brushed back stiffly at the sides. His eyes were small but kind-looking and his chin was fat and overhung his collar. Still, you wouldn't mind introducing him as—as "my husband, Mr. Bowes." What nonsense, of course—still, Fred had said, had told Natalie that Bowes—Dora hoped her hair looked well and that she hadn't put too much powder on her face in Natalie's room.

Bowes and Fred and Green talked about the political situation. The three women looked at one another and smiled. Natalie left the room, came back a minute later and announced that "dinner was ready."

They went into the dining-room, the three women first, followed by the three men. Natalie pointed to their places: "You sit there, Lillian, by Fred, and Dora on the other side of him, and Mr. Bowes, if you'll sit here by Miss Gregson. Ray, I hate to make you sit by

your own wife, but you know how hard it is to arrange six. I know you won't mind. I always say I actually believe Lillian and Ray are still fond of one another."

This last pleasantry was an attempt at daring and was appreciatively received as such.

The dinner started. There was tomato soup first. Dora suspected that it was canned, but she thought it quite good nevertheless. The small dining-room was warm. Natalie was the type who believed that certain things were necessary for a "good home dinner," and she never varied her selections no matter what the weather called for. "Good home dinners" always commenced with soup.

Dora tried to eat daintily. She held her spoon quite at the end and sipped just a little from the side of it, ladling the soup carefully away from her. She wanted Bowes to see that she had awfully good table manners. She was a bit dismayed to find that he didn't notice how she was eating. He was enjoying his soup, evidently. He had tucked his napkin into his waistcoat. Dora didn't like that. She felt it wasn't exactly good form. Still, he was a fat man; maybe it was better. But she'd read, some place, that a wife can do a lot with a husband, if she starts right, at the beginning. Little habits like those—

Dora knew she ought to talk to Bowes, ought to say something witty and interesting. She had watched unmarried couples, out together, and the girl was always talking a great deal. She realized, almost in a panic, that she didn't know how to talk to men. She looked at Bowes. She couldn't think of a single thing to say to him.

The meat course followed the soup. Fred carved the large roast, after Ray and Lillian and Natalie had teased him a bit about his carving and predicted that he'd slide the whole thing on to the floor if he wasn't careful. Bowes said very little. Dora looked at him brightly once in a while, but didn't catch his eye. With the meat came mashed potatoes, pears and carrots. Dora thought it a very nice dinner.

From the way Bowes ate, she knew he was enjoying it. She had picked up quite a lot of information about men, and one of these bits of knowledge was that, after a man has had an enjoyable meal, you can turn him around your finger. If he would only unbend a little, talk to her. If she could just be interesting! She studied his features as well as she could without staring, his fat cheeks, full of little red veins, his rather large, shapeless mouth. This wasn't the face she had imagined. It was entirely strange. Would it ever become really familiar to her, would she grow fond of it, even?

Bowes turned to Dora and said something about having known Fred for years and years. Dora told him, with a little, nervous giggle, that she had known Natalie for years and years, too. She thought that a good beginning. Then Bowes said that he was tired, had been "running his legs off all day," trying to see an out-of-town customer and then had missed him. Dora looked and expressed sympathy. She said: "Oh, that's too bad, Mr. Bowes. You must be tired. Men work so hard." She knew—hadn't she read, thousands of times?—that the way to interest a man is to let him talk about himself, to be interested in the things he liked.

"What business are you in?" Dora asked then.

Sure enough, between bites, Bowes told her a little about his business, lapsing into silence after a few sentences.

Dora couldn't think of another thing to say to Bowes, though she tried awfully hard. She must say something, right away. She tried the theatre, then said: "Do you enjoy going to see good plays, Mr. Bowes?"

Bowes admitted that he did like good plays, when he was in a town that had them, and asked, "Have you seen 'Friendly Enemies'?" Dora hadn't. So she tried him with "Have you seen Ethel Barrymore in 'Déclassée'?" But he hadn't seen that, and, as Dora's visits to the theatre had been infre-

quent, the conversation languished again.

Dora was glad when the conversation became general. They listened to stories of Lillian's washerwoman, "who wears my clothes every week and I know it," and the package Natalie lost and recovered, as if by magic, a whole week later.

Dora tried to think up something clever to tell so Bowes could see how entertaining she could be. Finally, she told about the young girl who had done some work for her a few weeks before. She thought that awfully funny, and, as it had really happened, she knew it wasn't like telling an old story everyone had heard. When the girl left, in order to establish easy communication with her, Dora had asked, "Have you a telephone at home?" and the girl had answered: "No'm, but we have a telephone book and we are saving up for electric lights." Everyone smiled kindly, but the story seemed flatter than she had hoped.

The salad came, Mrs. Wort taking the dishes away rather haphazardly and putting down the salad plates two at a time, one at the right and one at the left of the persons she served. Dora continued to eat daintily, nibbling at the salad. She had read that men disliked seeing women eat heartily. If Bowes would only look at her!

But Bowes didn't. Of course that was just his way. Perhaps he was bashful. Dora had read that men are usually shy, just big boys, really. She asked him several questions, as many as she could think of, and he answered courteously. The dinner was nearly over.

She wondered how it would seem being married to Bowes. Would she know what to say to him if they were married? He was so unlike the way she had pictured him. In her youth she had had a definite ideal. He was a handsome college boy then, who read a lot and who talked about all sorts of romantic things. Of course she had never met anyone like that. She had cut out a cover from the *Saturday Evening Post*, a young man, sweater-clad, accompanied by a bulldog, and had mounted this on green mat-board and hung it in her room. Years ago she had thrown it away, but the memory remained, definite, pleasant. The ideal became older as the years passed, of course. Bowes, the fat salesman, did not fit into the picture. And yet Bowes was real, here at her side—

As Dora looked at Bowes, with little side glances, she abandoned her ideal altogether and knew that Bowes would make quite a satisfactory substitute. He wouldn't understand her subtler emotions. She wouldn't be able to tell him the little things she had always expected to tell her husband, though she couldn't think what they were just now. But he would always be pleasant and polite.

She saw herself waiting for him to come home to dinner, going to the theatre with him. He was the type who, after he is married, would always be proud of his wife. She was surprised at her opportunity. Surely a man like Bowes could get a better-looking, more interesting, even a younger girl. And yet he was single, had expressed himself definitely to Fred as in favour of a home and marriage. It all seemed awfully nice. If she could only talk to him brightly and gayly!

Bowes volunteered only a few words, but answered promptly when Dora asked him questions, about the weather and "Do you like living in New York?"

Dora smiled at him, tried to establish a sort of friendship, but he seemed awfully distant, unapproachable. She wished she knew more about men and what to say to them. Women walking with men and at the theatre always seemed to know what to say. What could she do now? She ought to be saying something. Anything but this silence.

Drug store "brick ice cream" and wafers followed the salad. There was no coffee. After the dessert they all went into the living-room, where it seemed a little cooler. Natalie put some new records on the Victrola, a lively

jazz, then a "classic" number, a song with violin accompaniment. As usual, the women looked vacantly into space with what they believed was a dreamy expression which would show their great love of good music, while the men looked bored. Then they all talked.

IV

Bowes, it seemed, was "a great talker" when he got started. The dinner had satisfied him evidently. He leaned back now, in the larger of the two mulberry-velour-covered chairs and loosed a fund of travelling men's anecdotes. They were all expurgated and some of them amusing. One or two bordered, ever so slightly, on the risqué and, at these, Natalie and Lillian giggled loudly.

Dora looked at the floor and felt she was blushing, hoped so, even. Bowes ought not to tell things like those, unless he really, well, was serious, she felt. Of course, he didn't mean anything, but, after all, she was the only single girl present.

At a quarter to ten the Greens rose to go. There was a little Miss Green at home, Lillian explained to Bowes, and the woman hired for the evening might disappear, like as not, and leave her all alone if they didn't get back early.

After the elaborate leavetakings were over, Dora said that she, too, must be going.

"Sit down, sit down," said Fred heartily, "what's your hurry? The evening's just begun."

"Don't go, honey," begged Natalie prettily, "we're having such a good time."

Bowes continued his stories. Of course, he didn't tell them just to her exactly, but it seemed pleasant, the four of them there, laughing and friendly.

Bowes made the next move.

"Got to go," he said, "wish I could stay longer, but I got to try to capture the customer I missed to-day, first thing in the morning, or he'll get away sure. Sorry I have to beat it. You're certainly fixed up nice here, Fred."

Dora sat, stupefied, dulled with a new feeling, almost a horror. She couldn't say, now, that she was going. He hadn't asked to take her home—wasn't going to take her home—hadn't made an engagement with her—hadn't talked to her, even.

She had to sit there, quietly. She tried to appear indifferent. Maybe Natalie or Fred—maybe Bowes was waiting for them to say something. Natalie fluttered around Bowes pleasantly, told him how glad she was he had come, urged another visit. Fred got his hat for him. Bowes shook hands with Dora, told her he was "awfully glad to have made your acquaintance," shook hands with Natalie, said, "had a great evening, this domesticity certainly looks great to an old bachelor." Fred would walk to the car with him—the door closed, Bowes was gone.

"I've got to go, too, it's awfully late," said Dora, and went into Natalie's room.

Natalie's duties as a hostess had robbed her of most of her energy. It was after ten. Simple as the dinner had been, Natalie had been busy with it several hours in the afternoon, besides having the worry of "everything turning out all right." She felt, too, that her plans for Dora and Bowes had not progressed just as they should. Still, Fred would tell her more about that when he returned. You can't always tell by the way a man acts.

"Wasn't Mr. Bowes nice?" she asked brightly. "I don't see how he can remember all those funny stories. What a memory he must have! Fred says he's a great business man, and that he makes friends wherever he goes, just like he did to-night. You saw how he was the centre of things after dinner. I was going to ask him to take you home, but when he said how tired he was . . . There's Fred back. I'll let him in."

Natalie ran out of the room, opened the hall door for Fred. Fred and Na-

talie went into the living room together. Dora could hear them talking in undertones as she put on her hat. She went into the hall. Fred and Natalie joined her there.

"You sure you aren't afraid to go home alone?" Natalie asked. "You know Fred wouldn't mind."

Dora, knowing how much Fred would mind, for it was a long trip and Fred had to get up early, said she wouldn't hear of such a thing. Natalie, Fred's arm around her, seemed aloof, indifferent, completely "a little married woman."

"I've had an awfully nice time," Dora said.

"Awfully glad to have had you," Natalie smiled, politely.

"Sorry you and Bowes didn't hit it off better," said Fred, "he—he just told me he's going back on the road. Fellows like that get used to travelling around—"

Dora hurried the dark block to the bus. So she was going home alone. What did she care? Why, she hadn't even liked Bowes nor his funny stories. Fat and red-faced and flat-nosed! Ugh!

Yet Dora knew that, if Bowes had liked her, she would have overlooked his stupidity and his red face.

Suddenly she grew unaccountably angry at Natalie and Natalie's presumption that she was so eager for matrimony because Natalie had been, and at Fred's pompousness in trying to "fix things up." How dared Natalie plan things so vulgarly for her! She had other things, higher things—books, music—didn't have to be married in order to get along.

A bus lumbered up and she scrambled aboard. It was not crowded now, and she had a seat all to herself.

Across the aisle was a stockily built man with gray hair and thick, but regular, features. Now, he was a thousand times better looking than Bowes, nicer in every way, Dora thought. Maybe he was already married, and of course she would never meet him—but—if something did happen and they should get acquainted . . ."

YOUR HOUSE

By George O'Neil

IF May should come, years later, to your house
And find the maples and the poplars torn,
The vine grown covetous of all the boughs,
And all the garden and the field forlorn,—

May there be someone with a wistful heart
And with a spirit kindred to our own,
To stand there dreaming and to dream a part
Of our youth . . . and the dreaming we have known . . .

When the white walls are crooked with decay,
When the green shutters shall be swung no more,
Who will imagine how we passed one day
Beneath a gash of roses at your door?

VIGIL

By Joseph Upper

I

FROM her lonely corner she watched him at his dressing. When he was ready to go, she laid aside her book, rose, and moved towards him inquiringly.

"I'll probably be back," he said.

She nodded, smiling. Sometimes she wondered how she was able to bear the pain. It hurt her so to smile.

"You have your key?" He exhibited it with some others on a ring. She smiled again. "Then come back when you are ready."

He replaced the keys in his pocket and took his hat.

"Don't worry, old dear," he said. "There won't anything happen that hasn't happened before."

He laughed and put his hands on her shoulders. She looked into his eyes and smiled. There was something diabolical in his eyes that bruised her.

"Nothing will happen," she said, but the icy waters of fear were rising in her thoughts. She put her arms about him and hid her face on his breast to conceal her tears. His hand caressed her shoulder aimlessly, absently. When he caressed her, she thought of strange pencil marks on telephone scratchpads. It was something to do while waiting for a number. Sometimes she had observed people deep in speculative conversation make similar marks on any stray bit of paper that was near at hand. She believed she had even done so herself once or twice in a rather difficult conversation with him.

She thought sometimes that she was never so far away from him as when in his embrace. When she caressed him, it was like dropping precious stones into the sea. The waters rolled over them and she never knew where they went.

Generally, he merely permitted her to kiss him; and after she had done so and there was no emotional response she would be furiously angry with herself and furiously angry with him. She felt then as though she would like to hurt him. Time after time she determined never to kiss him again, but she always did. His lips drew her irresistibly, always with the hope that he would answer, but she invariably experienced only the same silent rebuff.

Once or twice, indeed, he had answered her, and those moments had engendered memories which she always treasured. She would often lie awake at night and call them back to her and handle them in her thoughts as one handles the garments of a dead child. But even then she knew that it was not love. It was rather a great momentary pity that swept her suddenly into the light of its infinite comprehension and as suddenly left her in the darkness of its deep regret. Still she welcomed it, even though it finally abandoned her to her bitterness. It at least had its moment of exultation, its instant of ecstatic illusion.

He waited patiently for her to release him. Her anger burned away the tears she had sought to hide. She wanted to fasten her fingers about his throat, to squeeze and squeeze until he should lay violent hands on her in defence or retaliation. But she smiled at him and let him go.

"Don't wait up for me," he cautioned her. "You know I might not be in."

She watched him from the window until he was out of sight.

II

He had married her partly from gratitude, partly because there was nothing else that he particularly wanted to do. He had not loved her, had not pretended to, and she had known it. Why did she let him do it?

She asked herself the question over and over; and over and over she gave herself the answer. She loved him and she wanted him, and she thought that their marriage, even in the face of his indifference, offered a chance to win his love in return. But she was beginning to realize now how slight that chance really was. Theirs was not actually a marriage, but rather a domestic partnership. They ate and slept and paid the rent together. She mended his things and kept their three rooms clean and tried to give them a homelike atmosphere.

They both worked in the big hospital over on the hill. It overshadowed their domesticity, for they could always see it from the windows of their rooms. She looked out at it now as she sat by the window, and thought how much a part of both of them it was. She had met him there and loved him. It was there that her patient tenderness had nursed him through long nights and days of stupor, delirium and convalescence. It was after the convalescence that they were married and took these three rooms in the white house down the road.

He resumed his work, and after a time she, too, went back and became a part of the grim place, ministering again to her family of the insane. So they had both worked on much the same as formerly except that now they lived together in the three rooms on the second floor of the white house, and ate and slept together, and their money paid the rent.

Almost as soon as it was done, it seemed to her that he regretted it. It was as though he realized that he had done her an injustice by giving her the nominal possession of something which she could never hope to have in its entirety.

As the days went by, she grew accustomed to the strange relation, always cherishing in the depths of her mind the hope that he would come to care. But the hope went hand in hand with fear. If he was not hers, there was always the danger that he might be taken from her. Perhaps even now it was being done. She did not know where he had gone, when he would return. His words came back to her with ominous clearness.

"There won't anything happen that hasn't happened before."

Her hands grasped the sides of the chair in an agony of doubt, suspicion, and helplessness. She rose and began to pace up and down the room.

There were women in town whom he knew, whom he had known before he married her. Perhaps one of them —or had he only said what he did in order to remind her of his detached position, to stunt and break down the delusional hope within her?

It wasn't the thought of what might happen that weighed upon her. It was the consciousness that she had failed to render such happening impossible. If he cared, genuinely and intensely, as she did, nothing would, nothing could, happen. But she knew that he did not, and a kind of rage burned within her when she conjectured where he might be, whom he might be with.

It wasn't jealousy exactly—not any conventional jealousy. She felt no anger towards these other women. She felt no special anger against him. It was herself with whom she was furious. She rebelled at her own limitations, her lack of charm, her deficient physical appeal. If only he could look *into* instead of *at* her, surely he would know that her love must be answered.

But there was nothing she could do now but wait, and while she waited she must fill the time. She went about her

work mechanically. Her thoughts followed *him* into the city, met him there in the guise of another woman, and went with him—where? Where did they go—people like that? Her thoughts stopped and came back to the three rooms in the small white house by the road.

When her work was done, she sat by the window again and looked out at the still world. It was as still and perfect as her love for *him*, and yet people did not appreciate it. They went madly into the city to the theatres, the movies, the dance halls, the wrestling matches. Or they lounged on the busy corners or walked the streets when they could have the calm joy of the country and the peace of God. But they were blind to the beauty of simple, natural things, and they rushed away from them just as *he* had rushed away.

As the evening wore on she tried to read, and then she tried to sew, but there was no forgetfulness in either one.

Finally she made ready for bed and lay down to wait until he should return. From where she lay she could see a square of night-blue sky framed by the window, and she counted four burning stars in the small space. They looked as though they were neglected, too, despite the fact that they shone so brightly and that there were four of them. The world had forgotten them as it had forgotten other natural and beautiful things, and they were left in their shining solitude to wait for the millennium.

She thought of *him* again and wondered where he was. The night seemed to be a part of the profound stillness that filled her waiting spirit.

The hurried ticking of their little clock came to her from the shadows.

III

She started up with the sudden knowledge that she had been asleep. But it was just as well. If he had come in and found her sleeping, he knew that she had taken him at his word. But perhaps he had not come in. She turned eagerly, hoping to see the familiar form beside her. But he was not there. She could only have slept a little while then. She would get up and read some more so as to be waiting to greet him when he came in. Perhaps he would tell her where he had been. And if he did, would she believe him? She thought she would. He had no reason to lie to her. He could be frank and brutal about it if he wished. She already knew he did not care. But he would want to spare her, and so he would say nothing. Then she would know that—

She threw on her dressing-gown and reached for the light over the bed. She felt for it blindly, for her eyes were turned in the direction of the clock. She could hear it ticking in the darkness.

When she saw the hour, she stood staring before her in a daze. It was three in the morning. She had slept a long time, then. And he had not returned. Three o'clock. He would certainly not be in now. He had stayed somewhere—where? His words recurred to her. All the old fear leaped up in her heart.

"Nothing will happen that hasn't happened before."

Then she had failed, utterly. He was being drawn back into the old maelstrom, away from her. It would only be a question of time before he would leave her altogether.

She walked to the chair by the window and sat down, looking out at the queer light. A damp breeze ruffled the lace about the neck of her dressing-gown. Somewhere in the far distance a train whistled as it rushed through the dull hours between night and morning.

It was a fallacy, then, this idea of the spiritual power of love. There was nothing but the flesh after all. Charming manners and good looks did it all. She had failed, utterly.

For hours she sat staring out at the dismal landscape. Finally she went back to bed. She couldn't cry. Something within her was too dry and

withered to evoke tears. She felt like an old woman. She slept at last, her exhausted hopes dragging her down into the regions of forgetfulness.

IV

When she came home from her work the next evening, he was there. She listened to his account of an unexpected automobile trip with some friends whom he met in town. They had had a breakdown in a distant village and he was obliged to stay all night at an inn.

She wondered if it were the truth; who his friends were; the exact circumstances under which he spent the night; but she dared not ask. After all, he had come back. She had him still. He was here. Perhaps—there was still a chance to win.

She put her arms about him as she had done the night before, only this time she lifted her face to his, and to her surprise he answered her. His arms closed about her and he met her lips in a long, hard kiss.

As she went about her preparations for dinner, she wondered whether he had kissed her from a great pity, or to allay her suspicion, or whether he really did see in her occasionally something that he was loath to leave, that he had never found in the other women whom he knew. But it didn't matter. He had kissed her. She had him with her again. In time doubtless he would leave her for good, but that time was not so very near. And it might be that after all—anyway, she would make the most of her slender happiness while it lasted. No one could do any more than that.

NOTE ON A FLY-LEAF OF HOLY WRIT

By Paul Arthur Yawitz

WHEN I was sixteen my ambitious parents encouraged my association with girls. Now that I am sixty my precautious children warn me against it. I have searched zealously, but nowhere in the Ten Commandments is one admonished to obey his children. So I shall continue to honour my parents.

A HAPPY man is he who early in his career learns to discriminate between the various types of women and then later realizes the futility of discrimination.

NO man becomes a really first-rate liar until he has been in love at least three times and married at least once.

THE UGLIEST WOMAN ON THE BOARDWALK

By L. M. Hussey

I

HE had been oblivious to the young girls because they would suggest, in a measure, his unhappy romance. His grief was scarcely sentimental in the customary sense, yet he wished to avoid the evocation of old memories. In any pretty woman he might have found something to bring up the dead illusion, that, however dead, could never be wholly without its tormenting ghosts. In a pretty woman he would doubtless have discovered a reminiscence, a smile, a lowering of fringed eyelids, a graceful gesture, and these recollections he wished to avoid.

Yet when that startling woman, that gaudy and incredible spectre, smiled at him, he was surprised out of his indifference and out of his restraint. They met in the evening; a few unconventional bathers were still on the sands or running out into the surf, but already it was late enough for the crowds to begin their nocturnal melting away. He saw her standing apart, and since she looked directly into his face, there was no question that her smile was intended for him.

His surprise was immediate. Her ghastly person was evident in the first swift glance. She stood outside a Japanese shop and the light from within the shop came out and enveloped her without mercy.

Duncan was fascinated by her ugliness as if she were a Medusa. He found her courage not less astonishing, for how could she be unaware of her own frightful face and figure, and if she were aware of it, how could she smile at any man and expect his response? Suddenly it seemed to him that her smile was an act of rare courage, but a sort of courage that was scarcely natural, and so he felt a little thrill, such as one might in witnessing an unnatural act.

If she had been only moderately plain he could have passed on, he could have ignored her. It was the superlative in the order of her ugliness that made it impossible to ignore her. He felt it impossible not to acknowledge her smile, and with a touch of fixity about his lips, like one who forces a conventional gesture in a moment of profound emotion, he smiled in return.

At once she crossed the Boardwalk and began to speak to him. There was nothing redeeming in her voice, for it hung on a thread, tenuous, small, yet penetrating, like a cracked falsetto.

"How do you do?" she said, offering her hand awkwardly.

"Good evening," replied Duncan, gravely.

For an instant she twitched her head nervously, like a gaunt sparrow, as if her words were sticking in her throat and she hoped to wring them out by twisting the ropy column of her neck.

"There's no use pretending," she exclaimed, suddenly. "I don't really know you, but I pretended I did. I might as well tell the truth now; I never really saw you before."

Duncan was silent; she elaborated volubly.

"My idea was to make you think you'd

met me somewhere, and then of course you'd have been too polite to ask me who I was—but somehow I can't do it."

Duncan was curious, and he found himself willing to talk with her, for she was unique in his experience, the extreme of all the women he had known.

He bowed a little and smiled now with a touch of affability. He held out his hand, which she seized with an eager suddenness.

"I'm glad you tried the experiment anyway," he said. "I was bored walking up and down here alone, and wanted somebody to talk to. Perhaps you felt the same?"

She nodded instantly, like an amateur actor pouncing, at the voice of the prompter, upon a forgotten cue. She thrust her arm under his and he found himself being carried off along the Boardwalk. Although he was tall, she ranged several inches above him. He became conscious of the grotesque picture they made, and he was sorry for his response to her smile and ashamed that he had yielded to her nightmarish blandishments.

In a moment, however, his shrinking disappeared. It was late, the crowds were nearly gone, and in a measure the night concealed both his companion and himself.

"Where are we going?" he asked, with a touch of irony.

She did not appreciate the irony, but replied with a literal frankness.

"I don't know," she said. "It doesn't make any difference, I guess. If people are congenial they can get acquainted most anywhere, it doesn't matter where. I'm down here to have a good time—the time of my life!"

Her last statement was spoken with a vehemence that made it effective and convincing. Duncan, whose curiosity already existed, found himself more curious; he sensed an interest in this woman that made him forget his distaste for her nearness, and he was less shocked by her fabulous person. He found himself indifferent to what anyone might think of him, to the laughter they might arouse together.

"Are you hungry?" he asked. "Let us stop at one of these restaurants and have a bit of something before it is too late. We can talk better over a table anyway . . ."

She pressed his arm with her own, and her sharp elbow forced itself painfully into his side, so that he almost exclaimed. Her delight was evident and extravagant.

"That's fine!" she cried in her tenuous, cracked falsetto. "That's the life!"

He was afraid for the moment that she would kick up her heels in the exuberance of her absurd pleasure, but she quieted in a moment and walked along with what decorum he could expect.

II

He chose an unostentatious place and a remote table, but it was nevertheless necessary to pass through an aisle of surprised eyes; the very solemnity of their waiter was in itself an expression of surprise. Here and there he could hear a giggle.

Now, in the restaurant, with the lights shining on her and revealing her adequately, he had his first full opportunity to study her grotesque person.

She sat uncomfortably in her chair, now leaning back, now coming forward over the table as if she were about to fall into the dishes. Her eyes, almost without lashes, blinked in the light and coquetted appallingly with his own. Her knobby hands fumbled with her knife and fork, with her napkin, with the edges of the tablecloth. In the beginning she checked an impulse to push her napkin in at the V of her dress.

Her cheeks were hollow, her cheekbones were promontories, shiny and red. She had scarcely any hair, but what there was she wore in artificial waves, thin and petrified. It was a dull red, like the colour of dried leaves. Because she lacked eyelashes her reddish-brown eyes seemed always to stare. She had a long, thin nose, jutting out like a sharp ridge in the centre of her face. Her lips were very thin, wide, and gro-

tesquely rouged. She was extravagantly tall. Her body was as angular as a geometrical figure.

As Duncan regarded her she talked, and his lack of interest did not seem to trouble her. He scarcely heard all she said because his faculties were taken up with his scrutiny of the astonishing unloveliness that still fascinated him as a perfection of beauty might. He gathered, however, that she was alone here, that she had run off from somewhere, that she was enacting what she regarded as a stupendous adventure.

In those moments her words conveyed no definite reality since she herself was so unreal.

He continued to look at her and for a time she still talked, but finally his scrutiny seemed to affect her, for her volubility grew less, and he was suddenly aware that her awkwardness was enhanced; her hands fluttered nervously about her plate like ridiculous birds, plucked of their feathers. He dropped his eyes; she was silent.

"I want to show you something," she said at last.

Her hands dived down into her lap and fumbled with her large flowered handbag, from which she drew out a little, oval photograph, framed in imitation gold.

"I carried this off with me when I left," she said nervously. "Look at it."

She thrust the photograph across the table and Duncan took it into his hands.

It was the picture of a young girl, whose expression was naïve and sweet. She was not entirely pretty, for her features were not sufficiently regular; her nose was a trifle large, her face a touch too long. Yet the pictured face had its distinct appeal, the appeal that is often inherent in a thing that is young.

Duncan raised his eyes questioningly.

He found that the gargoyle was frowning, a curious frown that expressed an obscure regret. In some swift way it touched him as he saw it.

"Of course you don't recognize me!" she muttered.

In saying this, he found, her manner had undergone a change, and in that instant she had grown more real. For that moment, at least, she seemed to have abandoned her coquettish flippancy, an incongruity of demeanour that had made her fabulous; now she was no more than an astonishingly ugly woman with whom, in some fashion, Duncan found himself acquainted.

"I was only seventeen when that was taken," she explained.

Her explanation was given with a touch of vehemence, as if to emphasize its truth, as if she expected to be disbelieved, being fully aware of her present state, the measureless change in herself.

But Duncan believed her, he saw the vague, yet convincing, resemblance between the pictured face and the face of the metamorphosed woman in front of him. It was an astonishing contrast, a strange study in decay, and he found his curiosity given another urge.

He discovered nothing to say, and the woman herself was silent. The waiter came and stood near their table, and Duncan asked for the bill. He paid it, and they went out together, whilst those still remaining at their tables stared after them as if they were a notorious pair fresh from a scandalous enterprise.

Out on the Boardwalk she regained, by an apparent effort, something of her former ridiculous manner. She took Duncan's arm, crowded up close to him, ogled him with her startling eyes, laughed significantly at his words when they held no significance.

Duncan suggested that it was late and that he would take her to her hotel and say good-night. She agreed with an artificial smile that was ghastly in the night, like the broad grin on a death mask. They walked on for a while until they passed in front of the place where she was boarding.

She held Duncan's hand fervently.

"It's been *delightful* to know you," she said, with an absurd emphasis, an emphasis that implied a secret understanding, a plot, an intrigue. "I hope you're staying at the shore for some time yet?"

"I don't know," he answered, dubiously.

"At least I'll see you to-morrow?"

For a moment he did not answer. He imagined the picture of himself attended by this creature, this Medusa in everything but the dignity of a fateful face, and he saw himself walking with her in the daylight when all the crowds could look at him and laugh openly. He shrank sensitively from the ordeal.

In another instant he found the shrinking foolish. He had no concern with anyone in the crowd, and found their possible laughter without significance. In the pain that his heart could not suppress he was divorced from everyone who laughed, for whatever cause. He was surprised, indeed, to find that he could be curious, for it pleased him to imagine that all emotions had gone with his illusions, leaving him like a man who has been magically emptied of inner things. But he was curious, and so he nodded and told her that he would see her the following day.

The woman said good-night, laughed with the cackle of a frightened hen, and as a last word, repeated one of her former statements.

"I'm here for the time of my life!" she cried, shrilly.

Duncan turned, retracing his steps along the way that led to his hotel. He heard someone walking behind him and, looking back, found that a man in what seemed to be very baggy clothes was tramping along twenty or thirty yards in back. For an instant it occurred to him that the woman had disguised herself in these baggy clothes and was masquerading behind him, but he saw the absurdity of his thought and admitted that her unloveliness had turned his head a bit.

He mounted the steps of his hotel, wheeled sharply, and saw the man in the badly-fitting clothes go shuffling by, lifting his feet as if the shoes he wore were weighted and a burden.

Duncan went up to his room and there for a while, before he prepared for sleep, he thought of his wife, from whom he had been separated just a month now. It occurred to him that sophistication had been no armour to save him from the defeat of lost illusions. When he had found his love he had found it with the doubts of one who disbelieved in romantic realities, but they charmed him nevertheless and he had accepted romance as if it were a game, full of delightful unreality. Yet to be in love had become real, he found, and now it was over and there remained the tormenting memories of emotions as profound as the sky and as evanescent as the clouds. Before he went to sleep he lost his regrets in speculations about the gargoyle.

III

THE next day he saw her in the sunlight, which was merciless. At night she had had something of the justification of a spectre, for spectres move about in the night. In the sunlight she was without place. Her clothes made a travesty of her face and figure; they were youthful clothes, the summery dress of a young girl with ruffles and coloured stampings. Duncan found her horrible and horribly interesting.

She began to talk of the people she knew and said that she hated low people, but enjoyed people of Duncan's sort.

"I didn't spend my whole life in the country," she said.

Duncan had chosen a relatively secluded spot under one of the pavilions. They sat down in the sand and he questioned her.

"You live in the country?"

"I did . . ."

He waited; she began to amplify with her customary volubility.

"Don't think I was born a jaw; I wasn't any country girl. I was young and silly like young people are, but Warren looked different then than he does now. I didn't imagine what I was getting into . . ."

She unfolded her story in a circumlocutory manner, but Duncan began to understand, and as he understood she became more and more humanized in his eyes. Her reality grew, softening

her angular body and making her face less grotesque.

He had seen the little photograph and he was able, now, to vision her as a young girl, with a sweetness that was equivalent to prettiness; it was suddenly apparent to him that when the young man whom she called Warren had come to her she had received him with the illusions that are the common property of all that are young; he had made her dream and invested her future in a glamorous dress that was real, that held no colour of doubt. Duncan's sympathy went further, and he saw that the boy Warren must have had his dreams too, and believed, like the girl, in the eternity of a moment.

The boy had come to the city from the country, and when his father died he went back to the farm that was now his own; at this time they were married.

The crudity of the struggle that followed conquered their dreams, although the woman, telling her story, did not tell it in these words: her words were bitter and resentful.

She resented the memory of years of work, an endless procession of days without variation to the routine of their trivial and exhausting tasks. The only punctuation in these years was found in the weeks when she lay in bed after each successive childbirth. She forgot everything but the immediate necessities, forgot about the clothes she had once wanted, the little things she had desired, the comforts she had imagined. The only memory of her charm was found in the photograph framed in imitation gold, the one she had carried away with her in her flight.

"Three weeks ago," she said, "my youngest boy left school and went to work. That was the last—they're all working now. I've been saving up for more than four years. I took my money and packed up my things, and went away early in the morning. I'd told Warren time and time again that he'd wake up some day and find me gone; I wasn't going to live all my life that way! I'm away from it! I don't know what I'll do, but I'm going to find some fun. Lord! I deserve some fun!"

She expanded upon her vague expectations like a child telling its future purposes and Duncan watched her gravely. For a moment, in his incredulity and wonder, he felt that he would have to question her, ask her definitely what was the life she expected to find, what was the life she had run away to discover. It came to him she had run away from the only reality she could ever know, and that anywhere else she would find an overwhelmed unreality; that every fact and every hope of life was for ever beyond her grasp save only the fact and reality of her degradation.

But he could not ask her this, or tell her his thoughts, for he saw at the same time that she was in a second childhood of credulity and belief, and as incredulous of defeat as a child. With a shock of discovery he found himself in sympathy with her, and wondered if he would go on, losing, with the hastening years, all possibilities of glamorous fulfilments, and in the end believe again and make a mad quest of illusions. It seemed possible; and he was afraid, as if something physical had given him the fear.

They got up from the sands at last and rejoined the crowds moving back and forth along the Boardwalk. Again Duncan took her to the hotel, parting from her, but agreeing to see her again in the evening. He was not aware why he agreed to this, for she was no longer mysterious, no longer even grotesque and interesting because of her grotesquery, but only pathetic. She made him uncomfortable; her fate was almost prophetic, he thought.

As he went back to dinner in his own hotel he was surprised with the discovery that the badly-dressed man whom he had observed the night before was near-by in the crowd, and Duncan wondered if the fellow were really following him. He had no chance to see his face, and this was lost in the crowd before Duncan had an opportunity to scrutinize him. During the course of dinner he forgot about this fellow, who was unconnected with any of his

thoughts, and after dinner he went to find the woman, whom he felt he would see now for the last time.

They walked together to one of the long piers, and there they sat and for a time listened to the band and watched the crowd dancing. Both were rather silent, but in the end the woman resumed her abominably artificial manner, and, grinning once more, touched Duncan's arm in her conspiratorial way.

"It's very slow here," she said. "Let's have a little party together."

He looked at her inquiringly, half-wonderingly. She believed in her pretence, she might even believe that she was charming him!

"Let's go back to the hotel," she said, whispering now. "I've the things in my room and we can make some cocktails. That's better than sitting here."

He got up and followed her mechanically, wondering where she had heard of cocktails, wondering if she knew what a cocktail was, and what sort she would make. He felt uncomfortable about going into the hotel with her, but she entered flamboyantly, as if she were proclaiming a secret sin of which she was proud.

Her room was piled up with dresses, extravagant clothes, flowered, and coloured, and gay. She had to take a dress from one of the chairs to provide him with a place to sit down. Then she produced bottles from a closet and in a moment he found her shaking up a mixture and pouring it into two glasses on a small table near her bed.

He took up the glass and sipped the mixture, wondering if it were real. He seemed in a dream then; *she* could not be real, with the extravagance of her hopes, her unreal quest!

He emptied his glass, she emptied hers, and both were returned to the table. She was sitting on the edge of the bed and he was seated near the little table. She leaned over and laid her hand upon his. He did not move, he said nothing, her hand touched his, and he scarcely understood then the familiarity of her gesture.

Was she, he wondered suddenly, going to make love to him? He did not stir, but he felt that in the end he would spring up and run out of the room, as if it were peopled with ghosts, mad ghosts repeating the acts of life in their unsubstantial forms of wraiths.

He did not know how long her caressing gesture persisted until it was interrupted by someone who blundered in the hall outside her room. The door opened—a man stood on the threshold looking in at them.

At once Duncan recognized this man, for it was the one whom he had observed the night before and that same afternoon; now Duncan could see his face.

He was scowling, grimacing. He wore a straggling moustache almost too unkempt to be real. His lips were drawn up into a snarl, and he seemed to be without teeth save for two discoloured fangs projected downward like abortive tusks. He had a small head covered with thick, black hair. His face was wrinkled and tanned like a man who had lived all his life in the sun and rain.

The woman sprang up; the spell of unreality was broken.

"Warren!" she exclaimed.

"Now I've caught you two," he growled.

She stared at him, speechless.

"I came down here yesterday; found out from the ticket agent where you went. I saw you two together last night and followed this feller after he left you. Followed him again to-day. I got you now, both of you!"

Duncan arose. He expected to be attacked, and he found his position superlatively uncomfortable and absurd. All the sentimentalities that this woman had given him vanished at once. He saw her fumbling with her dress, her long fingers twisting the flowered fabric like skinny claws. She was frightful, monstrous, appalling! He wondered at his folly in being here in this room with her, his folly in talking to her, the folly of his first answering smile. He saw her husband come into the room.

The woman advanced to meet him, and her nervousness was gone.

"What did you come here for?" she cried, fiercely. "Did I ask you to come here? Did I tell you I wanted you? I'm through with you, Warren, you go back to your pigs and cows. Why did you come here to insult my friends, follow them around through the streets like a fool? Go away from here; I don't want to talk to you!"

The husband did not answer, but stood staring at her, apparently subdued by her vehement abuse. Duncan realized that he was the spectator in a novel and significant drama; that the man was doubtless as surprised as himself, and less able to understand.

Indeed, an indubitable expression of stupefaction had come over his face, and he stared at his wife with dull eyes, as if she railed at him in a tongue incomprehensible to his ears. She began to scream out an incoherency of accusations, accusations against him, her life, her past. She screamed out her absurd vague purpose, too, and the little room was filled with her vehement, shrill falsetto.

Suddenly Duncan walked toward the door. The man made no effort to detain him, but stood as before in the stupidity of his astonishment. Duncan passed out into the hall, and the voice in the room diminished as he reached the stairs, became remote, meaningless, and unreal.

IV

DUNCAN decided to go back to the city the next day. In the morning he packed up his things and then went out for a stroll along the Boardwalk, for he had chosen an afternoon train, and there were several hours before the time of his departure.

There was a clean breeze blowing in from the sea, and out beyond the whitecaps, almost on the edge of the horizon, a sailing yacht stood white in the sun, motionless it seemed, like something sculptured there. The crowds were laughing and a touch of their gaiety came to Duncan, who felt almost content.

Then, coming down the Boardwalk, he saw the woman.

She was alone. He drew back under the awning of the nearest shop, for he did not wish her to see him. She was looking from right to left, ogling the men, grimacing like a comic mask. She wore a dress of some flowered material, and the wind blew it about upon her skinny figure as if it were hung on sticks.

Duncan drew in a surprised breath. Where was her husband? Was he somewhere behind her, hurrying to join her? Had she, in the end, given *him* a recrudescence of impossible hopes, a measure of her own madness?

Or had he returned, gone back without her, conquered by the vehemence of her uncomprehended desires? Duncan did not know. He would not go out and ask.

At least, she was there as before, walking in the crowd, grinning and smirking, tragic and ridiculous, a supreme unreality. . . .

DER TAG

By Stephen Hale

THE great moment in Smith's life was on the day the census man came around and listed him as head of the family right before his wife and three grown daughters.

DESOLATION

By Peter Dart

SUDDENLY the city grew hushed. An occasional bell tolled dismally. The streets were deserted save for a few stragglers who hurried by with starved eyes and set faces as if to their execution. Among them were a few reluctant children, dragged by the hand.

The restaurants were silent and almost empty. Waiters looked from the windows in dismay. Men frantically sought their clubs for protection. Women and paralytics took refuge in the churches. Letter carriers had abandoned their wonted task and no letters came to anyone.

The outward roads were filled with flying automobiles bearing away the fortunate ones from the horror which had overtaken their city habitation. All the wealth of the world could not have relieved their plight for twenty-four hours . . .

It was Sunday in New York.

AU REVOIR

By J. V. A. Weaver

DON'T kiss me! Not no more! . . . Oh, can't you see?
Everythin's perfec' now, the way it is.
Why do I hafta fight and beg like this?
It's been so sweet—now can't you leave things be?

Oh, now I hurt you. . . . Dear, don't look so sad—
Ah, gee, I guess men ain't got ways to know
How a girl feels, and when it's time to go,
And how too much of even kisses is bad.

But it's the things you didn't just quite do,
And what's left over for some other day
That make her hope and wonder and cry and pray,
And tell herself, " Next time," and dream of you.

Good-night, dear . . . please go on . . . it's for your sake . . .
I'll dream about that kiss you didn't take. . . .

GALAHAD AND THE GLYPTODON

By Ben Hecht

THERE is nothing so strange, so intricate, so adroit as the fidelity, the virtue, the magnificent morale of the average husband. The psychologist contemplating Bill Young would have told you this.

Not so the statistician. The statistician would have clapped Bill Young between the covers of his almanac and considered the matter ended. For Bill, observed from the angle of the norm, was the norm itself, the Great Average, the man whose picture you find in the geographies labelled Caucasian, the bone and sinew of his country's vital statistics. Observed from this same unchallenging angle everything Bill ate, thought, spent, the number of children he achieved, the murders he committed, the lodges he belonged to, his divorces, virtues, ailments—in short, Bill's entire life was a sort of table, an index, of the commonplace. Thus when you read in your favourite government report while awaiting your turn at the dentist's, that "the average married man of thirty-five earns $35 a week, has one child, one wife, one flag, one lodge, one tooth missing, one God and one eye defective," you were reading of Bill Young himself.

This cannot be denied. Whosoever gainsays it, lies. And yet, how sinister is the statistic! How it misleads, how superficial it is in its artificial truth! *A bas* the statistic! Let us fasten the eye of psychology, the shrewd orb of art, upon this Bill Young—and behold! The norm becomes an enigma. Those placid virtues, those bones and sinews of convention, become the stuff of fantasy!

Thus we have to do now with no fiction, no clumsy manœuvring of event. Bill Young, aged thirty-five, nine years married, father of one child, believer in one God, doer of average deeds, thinker of normal thoughts, respecter of respectable things, and faithful to one wife, confronts us in the laboratory of art. And I guarantee you that, if we watch closely, behind this automaton exterior is not only the stuff of fantasy, but the droll, baffling paradoxes which are ever the motives of sin and virtue.

Of conjugal fidelity it is difficult to write. Unless the scribbling be delicate, unless it be subtle, it leads into the police courts. Indeed, the very words themselves are offensive to refined persons. Somehow, by some whimsical trick, they smack of indecency. Thus, although Bill stands before us in the laboratory of Art, it is necessary for him to keep his clothes on. But never fear; the thing will get itself across in respectable phrases. I will relate you a story of Bill. The story will illustrate in a most cunning way the intricate workings of that strange phenomenon, conjugal rectitude in the male.

It becomes, however, necessary for you to read with one eye. The other eye must not be removed from Bill—Bill the Norm, Bill the Statistic.

The average married man of thirty-five with one child, etc., receives from his employer during one of the summer months two weeks during which he may acquire a coat of tan, catch five black bass, sit on the front porch in his shirt sleeves and be entertained by his wife's relatives. This period is known as vacation. It is a sort of shrivelled survival of the period which endured from

the last day of school until the first Tuesday in September.

In the thirty-fifth year of his life this Bill Young received such an allotment of freedom and hied him home on a Saturday afternoon with the exuberant consciousness that he was one of the despised leisure classes, aloof from commerce and the sordid routines of life. There was a certain small lake in the state of Wisconsin, a certain primitive hotel, and certain unfettered agitations which claimed his immediate dreams. It had been Bill's custom to spend his two weeks at The Oaks. Thither he and Mrs. Clementina Young had journeyed for five years. Thither they would journey again. For was he not a statistic? And is it not said that the average husband repairs with his average wife to the average summer resort during at least two weeks of each average year? But the following things transpired, swiftly, crudely:

1. Bill Young's mother-in-law awaited him.
2. She had a toothache.
3. She was determined not to go to The Oaks.
4. She was determined that her child, Mrs. Clementina Young, should abide with her at and in Bill Young's home.
5. In the course of debate she threw herself upon the mercy and higher emotions of Bill Young's wife—her child—pointing out the possibility of her possible death, the fact that she, Clementina, her child, would not have much longer to enjoy her, Bill Young's mother-in-law, upon this earth.
6. She sympathized tearfully with her daughter while this Bill Young indignantly packed a suitcase, oversaw a stack of fishing rods, and departed with hardly an adieu to The Oaks.

Thus, although the Norm appears for the moment slightly shattered, we still have the protecting statistical influence of the Great Average wife's parent upon the equilibrium of the Home. Bill arrived at The Oaks in a state of dubious meditation. He had deserted Mrs. Young as a result of the capricious anger her mother, Mrs. Sophonisba Brown, invariably inspired in him. But now, away from this peculiar influence, Bill relapsed into an average gloom. He loved his wife with that dull indifference which is the bed-rock of virtue, the ideal revered of Society. As he unpacked in his new room his thoughts lingered without emotion upon her.

He would write to her. He would apologize. Bill felt the vague necessity for apology. He would invite her to come, yes, to bring her parent with her. With the thought of this impending magnanimity Bill sallied downstairs to the primitive dining-room and dined off the canned foods so prized by the temporary aborigines of the summer resort. I have overlooked Theodore, the child. But what father ever thinks of his offspring, what one ever croons over its memory? Surely not Bill Young. Let us dismiss the child. It was more or less a statistic anyway.

Herewith I draw the curtain over five days spent by Bill Young at The Oaks. During these five days nothing whatsoever occurred. Nevertheless, I could divert you with those sundry realisms which mark time in all proper tales between event and dénouement. But I choose to draw the curtain. I desire to resume the attention of your other eye which has all this tedious while been regarding Bill as he stands in the laboratory of Art.

Just one pithy detail—the privilege of the psychologist who, though he descend to tale-telling, still clings to the ear of his treatise. This Bill Young, in all his nine years of married life, had not once been false to the vows at the altar, that is, had never once betrayed the faith and trust of his mate. What a statistic!! How it gurgleth of beauty! Yea, it standeth forth in a wicked world, a world disturbed by the blatherings of iniquity, like a mountain on a dark day.

But doth it hold water (we pass from the mountain)? Doth it mean what it meaneth? In other words, is this conjugal fidelity a fidelity or is it not? Does the square of its hypotenuse equal

the sum of the squares of both its sides? Enough. We have established the possibility of paradox. Let us return to the sixth day. On the sixth day the following events transpired, swiftly, crudely:

1. Mrs. Sophonisba Brown departed, for reasons immaterial, from her daughter's home.

2. Mrs. Clementina Young decided to go to The Oaks.

3. Mrs. Clementina Young decided, further, to go secretly, to descend unheralded, to surprise unannounced her husband, Bill Young, at the aforesaid Oaks, thus adding a certain piquancy, relished by the average wife, to her appearance.

4. Mrs. Clementina Young arrived, secretly, unheralded, unannounced at The Oaks.

The style is too abrupt. Let us follow what followed more smoothly. It was almost midnight when Mrs. Young entered the primitive lobby of The Oaks' Hotel. A somnolent clerk recognized and greeted her.

"Mr. Young is upstairs," he informed her.

"Very well," she said, "I'll go up to his room."

Carrying her suitcases, two of them, Mrs. Young ascended the primitive stairs and by following carefully the instructions of the somnolent clerk located her husband's room, entered, turned on the light, looked about her, found the room empty, exhibited her chagrin with a frown, seated herself, discovered she had caught cold, blew her nose, pondered, prepared an indignant greeting for her night-prowling master, proceeded slowly to disrobe, was overcome with an idea, smiled and—

Shoved her suitcases under the bed, concealed her clothes in a closet, unscrewed the electric bulb and hid it in one of her shoes, groped her way to the bed, entered the bed, blew her nose again, covered herself well, sighed, wondered, grew frightened, smiled maliciously, trembled fearfully, changed her mind and decided to turn on the light, changed her mind and decided to leave the light turned off, changed her mind and decided to turn on—

These are the clinical details and are related as such. Nothing Mrs. Young said, thought, or did has any further value until an hour later, when, the poker game at an end, Mr. Young, having won sixty-five cents and consumed two highballs and one bottle of beer, arose from the table of his host, helped himself to another highball, and sauntered with a pleasant sense of well-being toward his room.

Little did he know that Mrs. Young awaited him. Little did he wot of the involved future. Into the room he came, yawning, grinning, groping. There was no finding the light. Very well, he would disrobe (delicate word) without a light. Ah, the difficulties of the psychologist, the grave dangers which beset the seeker after truth! I would skip these lines which follow. In fact, I would omit all the subsequent elaborations. As it is, I proceed, praying you to recall we are now in the laboratory of Art, and if it be a bedroom, the devil take it, such are the fortunes of life. I will, however, proceed as refinedly as possible.

Bill Young sat down on the edge of the bed and yawned again. The article of furniture commonly used for sleeping purposes quivered in a manner more or less conclusive of its occupancy by another than the person who, fulfilling the dictates of Mother Nature, had seated himself upon its edge preparatory to removing his shoes and entering into slumber. Made aware of this occupancy by the aforesaid conclusive agitation of the furniture, Mr. Young experienced an involuntary shudder, he deeming that the article was occupied by some burglar who, wearied of his predatory labours, had deposited himself for a brief surcease in his, Mr. Young's, furniture.

While thus meditating upon the grave dangers which such action on the part of such a character involved, Mr. Young was further startled by the sound of a noise commonly and vaguely

termed a giggle, which giggle, proceeding from the conclusive occupant of the furniture, at once informed him, Mr. Young, that he had erred in his first deduction and that the furniture was not occupied by a wearied predatory character but by a glyptodon, one of the most ferocious members of the mud-turtle species known to inquisitive science. The knowledge could not but fail to increase his agitation. The glyptodon, although not endowed with the cunning of the human (*Homo Sapiens*), was yet a more dangerous and more deadly creature to encounter in the dead of night, cut off as he was from escape by the door, which he had scrupulously locked, that is, Mr. Young. Swiftly there passed through his, Mr. Young's, brain, as through the brain of a man drowning, the confused events of his life. His early boyhood came before him in all its innocent and picturesque details, his adolescence, his old home, his kindly mother beaming at him across the dining table. As he sat endeavouring to summon to him those superior qualities which have made it possible for man, small, smooth, weak though he is, to triumph since time immemorial over the terrible and heavily armoured glyptodon, Mr. Young perceived in retrospect all the things which made life dear and a great, an overwhelming desire to live gripped him by the throat.

Alert, cunning, waiting for the fatal moment, Mr. Young held his breath. The article of furniture which, strangely enough, this trespassing glyptodon had chosen as a lurking-place trembled fearfully under him. Another of the intimidating sounds which had first assured him of the dread identity of the furniture's occupant struck at him through the dark.

For the second time Mr. Young was aware that he had erred. It was no glyptodon, no survival of that devastating monster that shared the dark with him, that lurked in the depths of his furniture. The repetition of the sound brought this home to him in a lightning moment. It was a cassowary, that strange Javanese fowl, that terribly helmeted monster of the Orient.

Relief flooded Mr. Young's soul. Strong, agile, shrewd though the cassowary is, he felt himself more a match for it than for the glyptodon. But he would be cautious. A fit of coughing seized him.

"Who is it?" he inquired soothingly after recovering his voice. It would not be well to anger the cassowary at the offset. A cassowary, when angered, is likely to forgo its more gentle qualities and strike out, much in the manner of the ostrich. Mr. Young had not taken a post-graduate course at Oxford in natural history and been honoured with the professorship from four of the world's greatest institutions of learning, for naught.

Thank God! It was an infirm cassowary. It sneezed.

Still it might be pretence, a mere ruse on the part of the feathered monster. Mr. Young's caution did not desert him. In fact, alone in the primitive room, unlighted as it was by any other light than the light of the stars, a strange, nameless fear slowly crept into Mr. Young's heart. It gripped at his throat. Although the immediate danger he had visioned in the case of the burglar and the glyptodon was passed, this fear still grew and grew. It caused him to rise to his feet, to move uncertainly about the room.

However, he had the presence of mind to seek to combat this instinctive aversion of the human for neighbours of a lowly, almost extinct, origin.

He repeated, "Who is it, please?"

Not that he imagined any cassowary might be gifted with the power of speech. This odd function is to be found in the animal kingdom only among the lesser fowl, parrots, paraquets and the like. No, it was merely that the sound of his own voice restored to him that feeling of normality, humaneness, which the scene was fast removing from his mind.

It was evident that the curious monster lurking in the furniture had some glimmering beginnings of intelligence,

however, for it burst into series of its strange noises. In fact, it greeted Mr. Young's question with peculiarly muffled exclamations which indicated to him at once that the cassowary was undoubtedly hungry, as well a cassowary might be that had journeyed all the way from Java to The Oaks, and was fast consuming the clothing with which it is customary to cover those articles of furniture commonly used for sleeping purposes.

And then fear, FEAR, came completely. Mr. Young's senses reeled. His eyes burned. His ankles experienced the most horrible sensations. His elbows twitched. Fear brought him quaking to his feet, where he remained gasping, quivering, unable to move.

For at least five minutes Mr. Young remained in this condition. How long he would have stood there no one can tell, not even a psychologist. But during those five minutes Fear, that most primal of all instincts, assailed him, claimed him, owned him. It was then the cassowary laughed. It is not a matter of surprise that Mr. Young should be startled by the sound of laughter emanating from a cassowary. But he was more than startled.

Slowly as the laugh continued to fill the room a subtle change came over Mr. Young. His Fear, his terror, gave way gradually to anger. It was a realization of the situation. The laugh had caused it, as had the beginnings of verbal sound which the occupant of the furniture endeavoured to essay in the throes of its uncanny laughter.

Thus, in the grip of his new emotion, Mr. Young became at once a human rightly outraged at the incongruity of sharing his habitat with a cassowary, which the knowing Creator had created for jungles, deserts, plateaus and mountain fastnesses. Drawing himself to his entire height, Mr. Young found his voice.

"Get out!" he cried, and there was that in his voice which would have struck terror into the soul of the most redoubtable cassowary, yea, even glyptodon.

"What do you mean," he cried, "by coming into my room and taking my bed? Get out, or I'll call the management."

There was a shriek from the furniture followed by human sounds—words. But Mr. Young was deaf to such manifestations. In the flame of his anger he heard them not.

"Bill, Bill, it's me, Clemy," cried the cassowary.

But Mr. Young abated his rage not a jot.

He repeated, crying in all his original anger, "Get out! I'll call the management, do you hear? It's an outrage!"

He even dashed toward the door to carry out his threat, when suddenly his senses returned just in time for him to hear the furniture giving forth words amid peals of laughter.

"Bill Young, don't be a fool. It's me, Clementina. Wait."

So! It was not a cassowary! For the third time he saw his error. It was Mrs. Young. What a strange, what a remarkable thing!

"In my shoe," gurgled the now thoroughly identified occupant of the furniture, "the light . . ."

Thus were husband and wife united, the shoe being found, the light being replaced, the room being illuminated.

And now we return to the laboratory. Observe you Bill Young, robed as before. Observe that his tunic is white, his eyes brilliant. We have seen that in the face of temptation Bill proved himself the St. Anthony that he is. And yet . . . we must be merciless. Vital and irreproachable statistic though he is, spotless, noble and triumphant though he be, have we not as psychologists, as logicians, have we not proved the following thing?—

Conjugal fidelity is the normal loathing the male has toward burglars, glyptodons and cassowaries.

Thus we have finished. To the almanac with Bill! Selah!

CALAMITY

By John Hamilton

I

MY window was closed against the storm.
Snowflakes beat upon the panes,
So soft, so white, so lovely . . .
I opened my window an inch or two to admit a few of the beauteous particles—
I caught cold and almost died.

II

I had shut my heart against love.
A woman, who smiled with half-closed eyes, touched me with her slim fingers,
So soft, so white, so lovely . . .
I thought: "I shall kiss this woman and go away"—
She married me.

WOMAN OF DREAM

By David Morton

STILL must my heart lean toward you in the dusk,
Woman of Dream, whose heavy hair is musk
Of roses blown in some old flower time,
Whose eyes are summer, and whose lips are rhyme.
More musical than music heard at night,
Your voice drifts past me, and your image, white
And frail as lilies lidded on a stream,
Lies ever on my heart, Woman of Dream.

We have no part with time, no league with place:
Old centuries awaken in your face,
And all the opiate sweetness of the South
Stirs indolent and drowsy at your mouth. . . .
Woman of Dream, all else is dream but you:
The world is lies, and you alone are true.

THE WRAITH

By S. N. Behrman

I

ABOUT four he had given up working, thoroughly tired of what he was doing. He seemed to be marshalling an endless procession of words which had no meaning, no bearing on life. He looked at the last page. . . there was a certain factitious liveliness, a false coruscation. It might fool some people but it certainly did not fool him.

That's what came of writing things on order. Since the success of his first book he had written three; this was number five. How long would it last? Already he could not distinguish the last books from one another, from this. The real critics, the people who had "discovered" and made his first book, sniffed at the later ones. The publishers did not care as long as they could clip encomiastic sentences from newspaper reviews with which to decorate the jackets of the novels he was spawning. There was always some anonymous lady reviewer who thought the latest book of any writer his greatest achievement. . . .

A sudden feeling came over him that he could not continue this sort of thing. His brain was tired, his mind empty. It seemed to him that any one of the myriad people in the streets outside his window was engaged in worthier work than he. It all seemed utterly futile . . . And yet he would go on, he knew he would go on.

He rose wearily and flung himself into an arm-chair.

It was one of those moments when nothing could make life seem reasonable: when humanity seems like an endless file of people clambering aimlessly over a rocky road between gray, inscrutable cliffs. Grilling rose, went to the grand piano and began playing from an opened sheet of music on the rack. "La Lune Descend sur la Temple qui fut". . . . But his technique was imperfect—his fingers seemed all thumbs—and he gave it up in irritation.

He began to improvise—he had a certain pretty gift at improvisation—but the noises he made, not at all unpleasant, cloyed him.

He left the piano and sat moodily, cigarette in hand, staring at the floor. He wanted to go out but could think of nowhere to go. It had been his habit at about five o'clock to meet Olga for a cup of tea. At the thought of the number of hours he had spent with Olga, he winced. The whole affair was a jangling memory; what a fool he had been. . . . Certainly he would never let himself in for anything like that again. Yet he could not rid himself by this facile promise of the disturbing thought of Olga. What a mirthless joke everything was.

A picture of Olga rose before him, Olga with her innocent blue eyes looking into his in that strange way she had. It had always seemed to him that there lingered in the back of her head some image of a monogamous, a-sexual Shelley—Olga the ethereal. And then she had gone off with Partridge of all men: Partridge, heavy, gross, a peasant grown rich, Partridge of the loutish manner and salivary speech. . . . Of course it was quite transparent, Olga's etherealism. It matched her blue eyes. . . .

The telephone rang. Grilling did not

move; he rarely answered the telephone. But it suddenly flashed through his mind that it might be Olga and he got up, curiously stirred. It showed him that he hadn't got rid of Olga yet: that she was at the back of his mind still, most of the time.

But it was not Olga. The voice was nevertheless familiar to him; it had an engaging, cool friendliness that set touch to an indefinable train of forgotten memories.

"Who is it?" he asked a bit sharply, his voice expressing unconsciously the irritation he sought to conceal from himself.

"You've forgotten me then?" the voice answered.

"Who is it?" he repeated.

"Phyllis Deane."

He could not believe it.

"Phyl . . . ! Not really . . . !"

"Yes, really. . . . How are you?"

He asked her where she was, when he might see her. She was staying with some relatives in a part of town he had never heard of and could not meet him till eight o'clock. He made her promise to take dinner with him—she thought that was late for dinner—and they made an engagement at a downtown hotel.

He could scarcely let her go away from the telephone so happy was he to hear her voice.

"Talk to me," he pleaded, "don't go away—talk to me!"

"What shall I say? . . ."

"Anything. . . . The Lord's prayer. . . ."

"Same old laddie. . . ."

It was the tone she had always used to him, the tone of a mature person talking to a child. It delighted him. . . .

"I'm as old as you are now, Phyl. I've caught up with you and more. You can't come it on me with that tone any longer."

She laughed, her jolly, clear laugh.

"Wait till you see me," she warned. . . .

He walked back into the next room in a glow. Ennui had dropped from him: the sluggish rhythm of life had indefinably quickened. Phyl Deane! He saw her again quite clearly, a splendid picture of her, her strong slender arms stroking a canoe across sun-stippled water, her hair unbound and haloed. . . . Because he was sixteen and she was nineteen she had considered him a child, permitted him unusual intimacies. . . .

He remembered one morning when he had come to her house and she had let him sit at her feet while she dried her hair in the sun. . . . The years fell away—he saw her sitting there as though it had just happened: remembered the little brown slippers she wore, the lavender dressing gown huddling her pulsating body, the very fragrance of the rich-gleaming hair cascading over her shoulders. . . . Phyl Deane! . . . She taught physical training to the school-children in the summer-term and he used to see her walking home at lunch-time followed by troops of the children. They adored her—everyone adored her.

In his happiness at hearing her voice again he forgot to ask about her husband. Mean little wretch. Had he died yet? Very likely. Why hadn't he stopped it?—he could have stopped it. As he remembered how easily he could have stopped it, Grilling winced. It was not a pretty motive that had kept him silent. . . .

He looked at his watch. Five-thirty. More than two hours yet. He sat slumped in his arm-chair, in the gathering twilight, remembering. . . .

II

It had made Grilling furious always because she treated him as though he were a child. It seemed to him dreadful that she should treat him that way when he felt himself so much older than the boys who were in her "crowd." His cousin Arthur, for instance, who wore a cream-coloured cap and was always making a lot of noisy jokes and who never read books. He was sixteen when he first met her and she was nineteen. The boys she went with were

twenty-five or older—to him they seemed quite old. He could not understand why she went with these stupid oldsters. They were so crude and harsh. He hated them all and was jealous of them.

She came from another town and because of her beauty the young fellows in the neighbourhood flocked about her. She had a brother about his age and soon after she moved into the town her brother took him to the house. He had never seen anyone like her: from the first sight of her he loved her. She came to him, her wonderful smile lighting her face and took his hand in her larger one—she was a big girl—and pressed it:

"So this is Arthur's cousin! . . ."

He could scarcely reply to her, he was so held by the beauty of her: the coiled brown-golden hair, the fresh round forearms, her steady blue eyes with their gold, long lashes. But later she broke through his silence and got him to talk—about books mainly: he was known as a "book-worm" almost from the time he was ten.

For four years, till she married, she occupied the centre of his thoughts. She knew that he was devoted to her and it pleased her. Once she went away on a holiday. When he heard of her return he went to her house. She was not in when he came and he waited downstairs in the yard. At last she came; he saw her, smiling and chatting, walk down the street with little Martin Price, whom, of all her admirers, he hated most of all. She stopped with Price, shook hands, smiled gaily at him and came across the street alone.

When she reached the corner of the house, where he was standing, pressed against the wall, she saw him. The look in his eyes was so strange, there was such a mingling of pain and gladness in them that she bent her face to his and kissed him. It was the first time a girl had done that to him; it blinded him so that he could scarcely follow her up the stairs. But she turned and called to him and asked him numberless questions about what he had been doing while she was away. He had read a good many books. . . .

With that kiss he crossed the threshold of adolescence; henceforth he looked at her with conscious desire. Up to then she had been to him an idealized figure, fleshless, like the heroines of his books. But he concealed his desire like one ashamed, hugged it close in his secret thoughts, because he knew that to her he was no more than a child, to be fondled. Also, and above all, he dreaded lest she should discover his secret and despise him. It stunned him—and it was not till much later when he discovered that she moved in a plane where such thoughts and desires were not strangers. It was the summer that his mother died and he first heard of her engagement to Martin Price.

After his mother's death he moved to his cousin Arthur's house to live. He slept in a little room adjoining Arthur's den and he could often hear the talk that passed between Arthur and his cronies as he lay awake at night. Martin Price was Arthur's particular friend and it was late one night when Martin had come in to confide in Arthur that he learned the truth about Price.

Of all the boys Phyllis Deane "went with," he hated Martin the worst. He was a little, red-headed, officious chap, very loud and self-complacent, because his father was a rich lawyer who had an assured position in the town. There was an unhealthy pallor on his freckled face, the cause of which was made known to the boy that night. After that he lay awake many nights listening to Price while he detailed his symptoms and the progress of his disease to Arthur. So that when it was rumoured about that Phyllis was going to marry Price the boy did not believe it. The thing was impossible, it was slander. Phyllis couldn't possibly marry this coarse little man, Phyllis the splendid, free as air and brave as the wind. It was incredible. Besides there was Price's illness: the boy had gone to the library and read everything he could find about it in the medical dictionaries: as far as he could determine the illness

was certain to be fatal to those who contracted it while under thirty.

Phyllis had been unusually kind to him that summer; since his mother's death. Also he was by now something of a celebrity in the town: he had won a scholarship to go abroad after his graduation from the local college. He was nineteen now and felt himself quite a man: from the intellectual eminence of his collegiate wisdom he looked down upon Phyllis's older friends; he was a good deal of a prig.

But before Phyllis he was humble, penitent, because of the sin he felt he had now for so long been committing against her—for he still desired her and dreamed of her when he was alone. . . . They were both splendid swimmers and they would take a canoe and spend long happy hours together paddling and swimming. . . . He would read poetry to her aloud and they would talk plays and books. But latterly she had seemed distracted, absorbed, wistful. He would look closely at her when she was this way, staring at her, trying to fathom her secret: she would catch him and say:

"You funny boy! Why do you look at me like that?"

And he would turn his eyes away, flushing, wondering if it could be true that she was to marry Price.

One night, when he knew she was out with Price, he could not sleep. The pain he felt at the thought of them together was too much for him and he crept out of bed when it was nearly midnight, dressed, and in the dark shadows of some trees near her house, he waited. He did not know why, but he waited.

It was nearly an hour before he saw them: they were walking along very close together. Price was shorter than she and his arm was clenched through hers as though fastening her against her will. When they reached the gate they paused and Price took her in his arms and his lips met hers in a long kiss. . . .

It was very painful to the boy; he stopped a moment watching but finally edged away and when he was far enough away he almost ran. Most of the night he spent in walking, very swiftly, as though driven—she allowed Price near her, she allowed him to touch her, to kiss her. He saw her, standing before Price, a willing victim. He felt the sickening pallor of Price's face and the memory of it sickened and overpowered him. . . .

He went away soon after that and did not see her again for a year, till after his return from Europe. She had been married for six months and Price was already mortally stricken with his illness. When Grilling entered the room where Price sat he was conscious that the little man was staring at him malevolently out of his sunken eyes, hating him because he was strong and able to ride about in trains and eat what he liked.

Later his cousin Arthur had told him that as his illness progressed Price became increasingly meticulous about food: eating became a devastating lust, which he could not control though he knew he could only prolong his life by simplifying his diet.

Grilling scarcely spoke to Phyllis that day: she was pale and worn but still beautiful. It was the last time he had heard from her until that afternoon on the telephone, an interval of seven years. . . .

III

It had become quite dark in the room. He rose with a little start and looked at the phosphorescent dial on his wrist. It was seven o'clock, just time to dress and keep his engagement with Phyllis. His mind was suffused with memories of her: not Phyllis as he had last seen her, pale and silent, but the golden creature of sun and water, with whom he had spent the happiest days of his life. He remembered her in the boy's swimming suit she used to wear, her full, yet somehow boyish figure, as she cleaved through the water with long, powerful strokes.

"Dear old Phyl," he whispered to

himself. "What a lark to see her again!"

He had not heard from Arthur or the others in years but he was sure that Price must be dead. And he thought of the jolly times he would have with Phyllis: she would enjoy meeting the literary and artistic people he knew, they would go to the theatres and the restaurants, they would motor out to the beaches and go swimming again! His mind was full of delightful plans for them both. And how wonderfully lucky that she should come now—when Olga—it was providential!

They would have great times! Perhaps—who could tell?—he was ready for any adventure now, even the adventure of marriage. . . . Why not?

He rode downtown in a happier frame of mind than he had been in for months, filled with an extraordinary expectancy, like a boy on a holiday. He was not unconscious—and it added considerably to the pleasure of the moment—that to Phyl he was a good deal of a personage. "I always knew," she had said over the telephone, "that you would be someone very wonderful some day."

He felt quite young again. Time had rolled back and he was not yet twenty and he was lying in the hot sun by a lake looking at the tiny waves that ran up like little crystal kittens to lick the shore. He was waiting for Phyl to emerge from the wooden bath-houses in her white middie, her unbound hair a gleaming mist, her sunned arms shading her eyes, deep blue, like the water in the shadow of the far island.

She was wearing mourning . . . so that it was a moment before he recognized her down the crowded corridor. Something else, too, about her, was changed; he did not know what but it kept him unsure whether or not it was she until he was quite close to her and looked into his eyes. She was smiling at him . . . all his senses kept telling him to act not surprised, not disappointed, as though she were as she had always been.

But in this he was unsuccessful for she said with a slow smile:

"I've changed, haven't I?"

"You're stunning, Phyl."

"Dear boy, Dickie."

They moved out of the crowded lobby into a quiet room. He was conscious that she was nervous, fluttered, troubled about how she was looking, what he was thinking. . . . It hurt him immeasurably; more than the change in her physical appearance; more than the sallowness of her face or the somehow faded eyes and altered figure, this nervousness of hers smote him to the heart. . . . Was this what life did to people?

This was what that little dead man had done to her then; the little man who was dying when he married her, who wanted her to walk with him to the edge of the grave because he feared to go alone.

They talked about one thing or another but each knew that the life had gone out of their friendship. So, like dead people, they talked about the past . . . about how various people neither of them cared about were faring. . . .

He could not bear to sit and listen to her: he jumped up and said with factitious eagerness:

"We must find some place to dine—not here—too stiff—some lively place."

* * * * *

It had begun to rain; the drops of water flattened themselves against the taxi windows like battalions of tiny spears. Phyllis was talking about the frightful failure of her married life: how Price had lingered on and on, how she had had to wait on him, how imperious he had been about his meals, how terrible it had been. . . . Why had no one warned her, why had no one told her? Surely some of Martin's friends must have known. . . .

But he was scarcely listening to the querulous voice. Through the dim curtain of the rain he was seeing another person—a girl, with bare arms and haloed hair, stroking a canoe across sun-stippled water. . .

ANGELIE

By Farquhar Sloan

ANGELIE sells charcoal in a little shop on the Rue du Dragon, on the right-hand side as you go to the market. You can see her there, sitting before her door any day in the year. She is always smiling.

Angelie is the soul of good-nature, and this is probably because she is fat. She is larger than we are, by a very comfortable margin, for she weighs over three hundred pounds. Her ankles are about as large as your hip, or a trifle larger; *her* hips are very extensive. She has breasts enough for the Sultan's harem, and when she moves they shake like jelly. Her face is very red and very beaming. Her nose is pug. Her eyes twinkle. Her hair, which is dark, she does up in curl-papers in a rosette over either ear. She is very much stronger than you are, for she can carry a lump of coal on her shoulder as big as a barrel and notice it hardly at all.

Her shop is about as large as a clothes-closet. She sells charcoal and candy, and she sells wood, neatly cut into sticks. It is piled in one corner, diagonally across from the parrot. Bananas hang in front.

Angelie is the soul of good-nature. To know her is to love her. She is the kindest Irishwoman in the world. (But she swears better than Queen Elizabeth, and it would never do to begin a quarrel with her, as all the Rue du Dragon has learned.) She is the soul of good-nature and the image of a troll. She weighs three hundred pounds and is very extensive.

Jacques weighs a hundred and five. You do not discover him at first. He appears spasmodically. He is about as tall as Angelie's elbow. When he sits on a small chair his feet dangle. His skin is dark and his hair and his brows and his moustache, which is very comical and bristly, are black: his eyes, too, are as black as ink. He is the smallest man in the world, without exception. His face is very vivacious, though without intelligence, and good humouredly devilish. Angelie adores him. It would be ridiculous to assume that they are married. He is her friend. They live in a small room behind the shop.

They are a very happy couple. Now and then, of course, there are domestic difficulties. But these are quickly settled, for Angelie weighs three hundred pounds and is as strong as a horse. She is generally seen—these performances are always in public in front of the shop on the Rue du Dragon—to seize Jacques by the seat of his trousers and whirl him in mid-air like a pinwheel. When she does this she swears better than Queen Elizabeth. But in a moment or two Jacques is a physical wreck and Angelie abandons him to continue about her business. It is an hour later, as a general and invariable rule, that he surprises her, when she has forgotten the matter, by knocking her senseless with a stick of her wood which is piled neatly in the corner to be sold at eight sticks for a nickel. As is natural, when she awakes with a blackened eye, she loves him better than ever.

The day following such a domestic upheaval they will be sitting—as they were sitting yesterday—in front of the shop for all the Rue du Dragon to see, Angelie upon a chair, with her head in a bandage, adoring; Jacques upon the doorstep, unscathed, talkative, proud as Punch.

TANTE MANHATTAN

(AN ESSAY)

By Stephen Ta Van

I

I AM of those homeless ones toward whom the City stands in place of parent; but the feeling is neither maternal on the one side nor filial on the other. Rather are we indifferent guardian and sardonic ward. How should she, who knows, and has learned both to despise and make use of the tricks, weaknesses and wisdom of so many shrewd, assertive men, concern herself specially with a clown like me?

Receptive, she is often aloof. Her attitude resembles that of the women parading on her Avenue in initialled motors, decorated Dianes of the Three Worlds—High, Half and Middle—of whom my friend the old cigar salesman says that they "seek always der evil in men, und allow der good to lang-vish." Like them, she is both avid and scornful of money; passionate, and cold. She is the great courtesan, narrow-foreheaded, thin-hipped. Though her power is scarcely at the zenith, her beauty is slightly past its prime, except for him whose sophistication finds beauty in the first symptoms of decay. In her vivacity there is beginning to be fever, and in her repose, lassitude. Her colours, deeply brilliant or languorously pale, suggest the Oriental.

"Come or stay, you who are eager," she says. "I promise everything and may give that or nothing."

Yet despite her poise, her Eastern languor, knowledge, and affectations, an amusing Americanism persists. She possesses, deep down, a remnant of the Provincial, a simplicity which evokes at the same time admiration and the affection that one gives to a child. Essentially, because of her femininity and that lingering remnant of naïve aspiration, she is still human and lovable, and before a sense of humour her pose of a vampire occasionally wavers. Rarely, the painted Babylonian features soften into a pleasant, if vulgar, Dutch smile. Ah, after all—*quelle bonne Tante Manhattan!*

Alone, and lonely, I strongly doubt whether she has heart or soul. Not even the steel-blue and orange lights above Times Square can warm me then. But there are other moods, less sceptical: as when, walking with Lovely-Eyes along upper Broadway on a June evening, I look up from the crowd moving through the mauve electric glow, to the white radiance above the bulk of the Belnord—dark, save for one medieval slit of light—and see the witch-moon shining magically down, as it has on all barbaric capitals; or when the little Queen of Egypt, glancing down a street-canyon toward the West, stops me to watch the splendour of a gray-and-crimson sunset across the Hudson.

If you cannot follow the connection from the sight of sunset or moonrise in the company of a wise and lovely lady, to a belief in Tante Manhattan's possession of soul and heart, then we do not speak the same language, you and I, and I cannot serve you further.

Now you have not only Ta Van's description of Tante Manhattan, but also a key to himself; for as a man sees, so he is. His vision is a filter, instinctively admitting only things suited to

his temperament. As he grows older it clogs with silt or waxes sharper and more effective, according to his retrogression or development; but it changes only in degree, never in kind. Nothing could be falser than a belief that any of us loses the essential character with which he was born. When events seem to prove a radical change in character, it is because the original estimate was false, or obscured by admiration of ability.

So it has been with the geniuses among whom I first came down, a gay dog from that dear college, to the precincts of Tante Manhattan during the consulship of McClellan, twenty years ago. How have the Mighty fallen, and the Erstwhile Insignificant, how safely some of them have scaled the heights! J. Whiteley, who was our butt in freshman year at the High Street eating-joint, is now a financial margrave; while last Tuesday evening the Grand Llama of the Sierras, oracular refuge and arbiter of all our early troubles—owner, appropriately, of the veritable voice of a mountain—was seen by me to descend, maundering feebly and escorted by fat Village frigates, from a third-rate chop suey house.

The contrasts are striking: yet the Llama, loving conversation better than deeds, had always the germ of weakness, and little Whiteley was no less the industrious ant when we were mocking him than he is to-day. At Ware, Whiteley had his peons, lower than he, whom he peddled out as theatrical supers or active pallbearers, and ruled through greed and fear as he now rules his drilled myrmidons in Cedar street; just as now the Llama, even in his degradation, has around him females, slaves to that astounding voice, though he is far too soiled for the attention of the fair ladies who once loved him. The characters of the two men have not changed.

I loathe the ditch in which the Llama welters. That special phase of Village life—*sans* hope, soap and discrimination; *sans* almost everything, in fact, save dirt and discussion of unimportant Harris anent dreary bygone Wilde—offends my nostrils. I cannot thole the blowsy, pseudo-intellectual trollops or their greasy pseudo-males. I feel shame for the Llama himself because, lacking in his sodden state a *claque* suited to his mentality, he permits applause from an audience of zanies. But even so, stubbornly I maintain that he may be as interesting, as much worth while, as a J. Whiteley, if only in retrospect. In his stale cups (*Eheu, fugaces, Posthume, Posthume*) he is still the phantom of mine old schoolfellow, than whom no man ever played a better combination of Melancholy Dane and Second Gravedigger, to my First Gravedigger and Horatio.

It may be better, so I think, to have been humorous in other days, than never to have been humorous at all. You cannot get humour from a J. Whiteley, whose Hamlet, if attempted, would be but a thing of windy suspiration and forced breath. If it be argued against me that Hamleting by wholesale is unnecessary, I shall ask: What, then, *is* necessary? To an extent I am with the poet, Robert Frost, who in his (reported) observations on Success said that he demanded it only of those who directed colleges or ran railroads.

Nevertheless there is food for thought in contemplation of the careers of us who came down at that time through Tante Manhattan's gateway, filled with the blind and glorious confidence of youth. We were all to be conquerors, in the Law, in Medicine, in Art, Literature or Business.

Eddie Howes and I, for example, were to achieve wealth through the connivance of a prominent Ware alumnus, a manufacturer, who obtained new blood by recruiting among fledgling graduates with much talk of Opportunity and a show, doubless sincere enough, of college spirit. Into the factory, close to the river, the recruits were inducted at the bottom; and they were expected to emerge through the office at the top, after an intensive course of training, as executives.

Eddie emerged in due form, and his

success may be deemed analogous, I suppose, to that of a Frost railroader. It is a cause for pride; but I shudder in visualizing, by a wild imaginative burst, an executive Ta Van evolved by the same process. Of course there was no actual danger. None save the raw fool that I was, and the well-meaning friends who were my advisers, could have dreamed that I would follow such a line long, or that it could accept me. I was the Ta Van of to-day, minus development and experience, as surely as were the Llama and the Paul Wrightstone of those days the logical forerunners of their present selves.

II

As with us, so with Tante Manhattan. The tenor of the merriment in her halls was the same, though its form was cruder, and the halls themselves were more garish. Those were the evenings of the Haymarket and the Tivoli, and the halcyon nights, or rather, early morns, of Jack's.

If I were writing letterpress for the usual series of etchings of Picturesque New York, I would importune the etcher to omit an impression of Old Trinity, if necessary, in order to find room to seize the interest of more—and possibly more prominent—veterans with a recollection of the Haymarket. It lured the wayfarer by ribald music at the south-east corner of Thirty-first Street and Sixth avenue, and often ejected him forcibly, later, by the hand and foot of Big Bill the Bouncer.

Bill was advertised by visiting college freshmen as the strongest man on earth, but in fact his pre-eminence was as vulnerable as that of Bull O'Donnell, who used to take position, with stick and bulldog, in mid-floor of Miller's dance hall at Savin Rock, and defy the world to put him off. Dave Cannon, of Denver, broke the stick and O'Donnell's nose, and threw the bulldog into Long Island Sound; and in like manner Big Bill of the Haymarket met disaster, by making too broad a challenge. But I never heard that anyone defeated the Flying Wedge at Jack's, and I personally proved the possibility of moving, with its brief assistance, from Jack's doorway to the space between the car-tracks under the Sixth Avenue El, without touching the intervening sidewalk.

Many remember the Haymarket, not so many the Chimney Corner, that subterranean den of mirth a little farther down Sixth Avenue. There, while the fight started to a chorus of eldritch female shrieks, the experienced guest had his choice of two courses: he might drop to the floor when the lights went out, and by following the wainscoat, below the zone of flying beer-bottles, find his way to the staircase mounting to the street; or, smashing the front of his schooner against the table-edge, he might sail into the fray with the heavy glass base and jagged edge for a weapon.

The old abodes of merriment have been demolished. Where are the gals, the tall supple gold-diggers of that time, who sallied forth of an evening clad in black and preceded by their brilliant pompadours? Where are Blanche, second cousin to a lieutenant-general, and Dolly-May of the poetic calves, whom Wrightstone, the poet, used to entertain at tea in Burling Slip? Rhea, Mord and Guiomar—of noble Spanish blood, the last, when not too far in liquor—where are they now?

Their names, recalling memories of tales hissed excitedly across a table-cloth, quips in the Elder Slang, and high metallic laughter from white throats in the streets at dawn, flow past me like a quaint ballade. I shall remember them if ever I grow old, not sentimentally, nor yet (God save us!) obsessed with the delusion, meet for the dying rake turned moralist, that all of them ended tragically as charwomen for their sins; but pleasantly, I trust, and gaily, as one still in love, without too much dependence upon melodrama, with this life on which, indifferent to gloom-gatherers and honey-squids alike, the sun and moon continue to shine blandly down.

Our brotherhood was always short, individually and collectively, of money for board and room, but seemed able at all times to scrape up the means of social entertainment. Results of this system varied, some of us reverting to a natural canniness, others degenerating into sloth. I was the only one to whom the irregular life—minus certain of its more vulgar phases—was permanently suited. Its shifts and artificial hazards stimulated me, and I have never discarded the habit of making, in non-essential matters, quick changes shocking to the normal American mind.

Thus a ship and a dark-eyed lady tempted me away from Tante Manhattan—lures that have always been hard to resist. It was my first visit to Paris, where I might be living now if I had not finally preferred New York. I visited also the Rhine Valley, and disliked land and people only a little less than I do to-day.

With regard to anything Teutonic, except sausages, I am hopelessly intransigent. The hatred may have been born with me, for as a boy I resented the German language and the thoughts appropriately transmitted thereby. When McCallum, of the Philosophy Department at Ware, jerked his wrinkled thumb first over his right shoulder and then over his left, pointing at the pictures on the classroom wall of "Kant the Lonely Thinker," and "Liebnitz the Great Philosopher," my mind registered reservations, and sought Voltaire and Montaigne for refuge.

I spent three years in wandering, often on shipboard, and eight others fantastically as a married man. When after long intervals, I passed through New York, I found the boys swallowed by the Village or coerced by masterful females. Wrightstone, the poet, met his fate in Ernestine, that savage giantess who with one hand lays out his flannels and holds a pistol to his forehead with the other. The Llama married a she-physician, became notorious as her husband, and began to compose his plaint, which he has been singing ever since, of a bright life ruined by a woman's itch for fame. Lesser lights slept six in a row on cots in Washington Square, in a heavy atmosphere dominated by Buck Dinant's snoring—I never heard its equal, even in the Army—or sought the roof with the cats on stifling summer nights, dragging the guest behind them. It was an eerie spectacle to see across one's up-pointing toes, as one awakened in the dawn, the procession of gaunt felines gliding over cornices from roof to roof in the gray light.

Only Colin McQuair, our literary genius, seemed to stay utterly *in statu quo*. He had begun as an author, and an author he remained. He has published several short stories, and is a prolific writer of quaint poems commemorative of his friends' birthdays and those of their offspring. I think he wears the same greatcoat, a little greenish at the seams, that he wore in 1903.

I followed a woman from Tante Manhattan's threshold, and in the train of one, returned. It was after the passing of little Helen, the super-sheepface, and a theatrical experience (oh, that company!) and a year and a half of the War, that I met Fleurette the Fair in Baltimore, a city that has for me no personality, now that a certain chef is dead. My first sight of her was as she entered one of their medium-sized hotels in a Hickson gown, and to the end of our association I never wearied of watching her go through a lobby. She grew a cubit at the door, and moved as if the rows of eyes that riveted their gaze on her were no higher than the level of her shoulders. I used to hang back to see the comedy—it was the Princess Flavia and a mob of oily, crook-kneed lacqueys, desiring what they did not dare approach. In some ways Fleurette was by no means so patrician, but to the end of our friendship she maintained at least a trace of the fastidiousness that saves her memory. Though compelled to withhold the ultimate tribute of trust, I loved her

enough to go to work for her sake, when less prosaic sources of income failed.

So many jobs! The magazine for females, best of its kind save five or six; the Jewish advertising house; the trio of trade papers, whose proprietor would have paid a fancy salary if he had been in a position to pay any; the business service, very modern; the insurance horror—always the same; the artistic monthly, managed by a maniac; to all of these and others, as educational influences, I remain genuinely grateful. To their Victoriano Huertas and departmental Simon Legrees, I wave a friendly hand, as one bandit to his fellows. They got as much from me as I from them.

But aside from necessity, I was as usual unable to take seriously what has always seemed to my personal viewpoint a game, of a mental demand equal in calibre to that of draw poker, but not so steadily engrossing. I am constitutionally committed to a belief that for me, a heron flying down the wind, a woman's smile, or an organ-grinder dropping from heat-exhaustion on the sidewalk, may be as important as, for example, the most effective way to advertise a deodorant. When fate freed me from the obligation of furnishing Fleurette's support, I naturally followed the interest or opportunity of the moment, and arrived sometimes in strange business alleyways.

Thus I became for a time a member of the Addressers' Club, which meets in a publisher's loft to address envelopes for circular mailing, at a stipend of a little more than two dollars per thousand of envelopes addressed. The trade is a recognized one, there are fluctuations of demand and supply, and it is a refuge for derelicts and cripples. The first addresser whom I faced across one of the long tables quoted at me Marcus Aurelius—*animula blandula quonunc abibis?*—and a second at the same table was a college student in search of local colour and a little pin-money during vacation; but Numbers Three and Four were silvery-haired, sly old men in stained clothing, one flabbily fat, the other thin as weak gruel, and both rancid with the shameful timidity of weakness, flouted age, and failure. They squabbled like defective children over their supplies of ink and envelopes, and watching them I was shaken by an imaginative horror, lest life should take revenge on me for all my flittings by bringing me at last, in seriousness, to their broken situation.

But such fears are momentary; one comes to believe that life, especially in Tante Manhattan's dominion, is not revengeful but indifferent. A second glance at the old addressers reacted on the sense of humour, and I was on as pleasant terms with them as one could be with two such peevish pelicans, until the day of my dismissal from the Club for illegibility.

I did not go jobless long. Among my friends and enemies of many nations and several races there is always employment to be found, for a little expenditure of shoe-leather. Yielding to the spirit of the city, one gradually acquires a comfortable Eastern feeling, like a garment grown soft from age and many washings, with regard to the future. Not only is Tante Manhattan's city the melting-pot of old nations to the point of nausea, in both the literary and literal usages of the word, but as I have written, it is beginning to show the Oriental tinge traceable in all great cities as they age, and vividly noticeable in Continental capitals. Beneath the arrant fakes and charlatanries is asserting itself a fatalistic character, half stridently aggressive, half let-it-go. In another century New York will be as cynical as London and Paris, though never so leathery as the former, and always more garish, more fantastic, than the latter. Bagdad-on-the-Subway, the name given to it in a Haroun-al-Raschid sense by the tragic romanticist O. Henry, may soon be applied to it realistically.

III

THERE was a friend of O. Henry, like him a writer and tragic fellow, who belonged by adoption, through

Wrightstone, to our old brotherhood. He married a girl of the gay world, and drank and wrote himself to death before forty. His personality reminded me of dry peas shaken in a new tin pan, but he wrote clever stuff, all of it forgotten now, except a little of the worst, that the movies' ghouls have resurrected.

Of what will the movies not get hold? They have even taken Maisie Ellistoun, my friend, a finished actress and a brave old woman, and made her into a screen mothah. The work is a godsend to her, but what a comedian is in danger of corruption by their decay! My belief is that the story of her encounter with the Methodists belongs with the Seven Humorous Wonders of the World, and when she starts on a diving-tour among the submarine marvels and wreckage of the Theatrical Deep, the listener comes up for air only when absolutely forced. The eccentricities of Blythe, the Coghlans' clamour, travels with Modjeska! It is Madam Aeneas telling of another ruined Troy.

Perhaps worry about her is needless. When I last saw her the humour was still strong. She was rehearsing for Garry Tremaine, the great artist, the superlative director, and at the moment of my appearance was standing in a line with three other aged Juliets, going through the motions of telling beads toward a property wall, while the great artist dallied with Clarice De Hoogh, his newest gal. Obviously, the conspirators were playing for a question, and at last the Napoleon of the Fillums was foolish enough to ask it; whereat Maisie replied, on the High C of venom achieved only by old thespians, that they were doing penance for his sins. The great man lost his temper, and there ensued one of those typically professional scenes at which John Lorry, leading man for me when the Pantry Players toured Connecticut's swamps and pastures, used to wag his drunken head and ejaculate thinly:

"Ah, queens, queens; tragic queens!"

I went from the studio to dinner, cherishing gratitude toward Maisie for her wit and for the joy of knowing in her a woman to whom the world is neither farce nor problem play, but a comedy of manners. I wished that I had known her when she was young. She must have been at times a slasher, as when she ran the Methodists from Dan to Beersheba in the lobby of the old Auditorium Hotel, and finished by carrying off the bellwether's fiancé.

Chance took me to a bakery of the crop fathered by Prohibition, out of the War. As I sat down it seemed to me that I had not been in that particular one before, and when the waitress came to take my order I was sure of it.

She walked with a graceful, gliding balance utterly unlike that of the usual tray-toter, and her face drew from me the name:

"Clarice!"

Instead of demanding "Whaddya mean Clarice?" in the city's language of the day, she spoke to me in English, and I told her that she would soon see herself in motion pictures at the Rivolligh and Ryeallto Theayters, for she was the twin sister superficially of the De Hoogh, Tremaine's new favourite, whom I had just seen in process of exploitation.

She did not enthuse, and I learned afterward that she took me for an old masher of no great ingenuity. But the coincidence served as an introduction of a sort, and in the course of a week we were friends.

Lovely-Eyes is one of Tante Manhattan's better moods. She is so young, I wonder why she likes me, and sometimes tease her childishly to make certain that she does. Her history is of no importance; if you are a scientist, you study the soil from which a flower grows, but the artist, who is half superscientist, half child, is more deeply concerned with the quality of the bloom. It is nothing to me that Lovely-Eyes has a dreadful mother.

I have shown her at the Museum the Old Woman Paring Her Nails, and the Chinese jade, especially the perfect lotos in the central case; a Babe Ruth

field day at the Polo Grounds; Pierre's, the Carlton, the Brazilian Coffee House, and sundry small peace-restoring oases which I will not betray by advertising; "The Jest," the Follies, "Jane Clegg," "What's In a Name?" and "Clarence," also (by error) "The Hole in the Wall," and one or two other unintentional farces; the Library, Weehawken by ferry, the restaurant called unofficially The Great Ships Go By, the scenes of some famous murders, and Staten Island from a comfortable distance. I have not yet taken her to the Morgue or to any of the red-ink joints, and only sparingly to the chief chop suey houses. She has a cleanliness that somehow does not seem to clinch with Lar Boheem.

I myself am out of touch not only with Boheemier but with its opposite, the City's Corn Belt, and therefore am alienate from the old brotherhood, of which all other members seem to have placed themselves, or been more definitely placed by time, in those divisions. To the dyed-in-the-fustian denizen of Boheemier, my interpretation of interesting life with Tante Manhattan appears priggish; to the Corn Belters, successful souls and normal, it looks futilely Bohemian. Even the Guard has broken its thin red line.

The ruined Llama I have not seen for many moons except in passage. Du Lhut, who was to follow Goya, is lost in I know not what thin wash of magazine girls, a prey for Doctor Heart. The poet Wrightstone pops his eyes of gloom at me, reporting from his gigantic Ernestine that if I reappear at their connubial nest with subversive cynicism and crude comedy, she will turn loose her trusty Colt on me, instead of on the poet himself as often threatened. It would be like his sense of fitness to have invented the tale, but be that as may be, the usual order is reversed, since as a rule it is the husband who mentions shooting, not the wife. But Ernestine belongs logically enough to one of those Occidental elements that seems unable to outgrow the threat of murder and its collateral threat of suicide—unable to decide to do the deed or to cease to talk of it.

By this route I return to the two qualities for which especially I love Tante Manhattan: her primitive simplicity and her civilized indifference. She is now simple but not crude. She offers the best of the West and the best of the East—take your choice, accept or leave. She brings together an adaptation of Old World sophistication, and remembrance of the enthusiasm of the New.

Each wanderer loves his special city, I suppose; we are entitled to our preferences in cities, as in wines, if we can pay for them. Tante Manhattan's home is my preference, and I pay by throttling jobs of such interest as I can discover.

The joys of life one does not pay for so directly. There is the writing, for example. Money and my kind of writing, fortunately or otherwise, are not closely associated. And there are Lovely-Eyes and—of deeper and more subtle importance — Cleopatra. The women whom I love want money spent on them, but they do not gouge for it. I am leaving the gougers for the Corn Belt's softer hours! . . . And then the lights. Who has lights like Tante Manhattan's? Not London or Paris, and the Eastern cities are dark. You can see Tante Manhattan's lights for nothing, up and down Broadway and the great Avenues, and on the cross-streets that are treacherous as the neurotic crews they house.

I have heard New Orleans men say they would not exchange two blocks of Canal Street for all of Broadway; but I will give them Canal Street and Piccadilly and Central Avenue and Market Street, and I had nearly said the Boulevard des Italiens, and keep Broadway. Not the Rue Nationale in little Tours; I will not give that, for I am holding it to die in, if indeed I escape the seductive Dr. Berthold Baer and Campbell's Funeral Church. But in the meantime, Tante Manhattan's Broadway . . . the lights . . . the dreams.

THE CHANGELING

By Johnstone Blair

LITTLE SISTER was not bright. She could not learn to talk. She could not even understand what you said to her. The brittle sounds of English were discordant in her ears. She could never learn anything. Her father, who was a very wise doctor and wrote learned books about hereinbefore-notwithstanding, was ashamed to have bred her. Her mother was ashamed to have borne her. She was not bright.

I was sorry for Little Sister; for she was beautiful. She was five years old and as dainty as an elf. Her face was rose-pink and delicate, her hair gorgeously golden and curly. But it was plain that Little Sister would never learn anything. She could not even learn to talk. They did not say she was a half-wit: they said she was not bright. I believed them then.

But one day in April I saw one of the prettiest pictures I have ever seen and I learned that they were wrong.

It was on a roadside—Little Sister and I lived in a town in the West—and it was full spring in that country. I was walking with my head full of great books—books as ridiculous, perhaps, as hereinbefore-notwithstandings, but pleasanter pastime—and I looked up with surprise to see Little Sister across the way, wandering happily nearly a mile from her home.

It was an April evening. There was an April air blowing the grasses. Little Sister, with wind-blown hair, was between my eyes and the sunset. She was walking elfinly against a background of swaying grasses and daisies and cowslips and the evening sky. She was bare-headed. The breeze blew her curls behind her. Her small dress flapped and rustled about her knees. Her head was tilted, her cheeks were flushed, her eyes were bright with happiness and laughter. She held out her hands somehow as if she were strewing things to the flowers. She was drinking in the April breeze and the scent of daisies as if it were heady wine.

And she was talking to herself.

THE way to be happy is to keep one's brain in the ice-box and one's heart in the good, warm sun.

THE image of a girl's first love is engraved indelibly on her heart. After that she uses a rubber stamp.

THE FUTURE

By John H. McNeely

MARIE HANGARD fled from the courtroom almost in terror. Her mind was a whirlwind. Her fingernails penetrated the soft white skin of her hands as she compressed them with all her strength in a tremendous struggle to keep back a flood of tears.

What a terrible experience! What an ordeal! Fortunately there was a taxicab standing idly at the entrance to the huge, dirty, forbidding building. She ran to the curb in her panic, jumped into the cab, and ordered the chauffeur to drive to her apartment.

A shudder went over her as she threw herself back against the cushions. Instead of a feeling of relief, now that the dread and horror of it all was over, she felt her nerves taut and at the point of rupture. Her thoughts dwelled vividly upon the scenes through which she had just gone, and in which she was compelled to play the principal rôle.

Those lawyers! How crude and vulgar they were! Their rasping voices and their loud, noisy, and vociferous wrangling threw her into a convulsion of trembling. So this was the way justice was administered! And she had been forced to take the witness-stand and testify before that cold, merciless, curious crowd. Even this supreme chagrin had not been spared her.

She would never forget the obscene old judge, with his austere and brutal indifference, sitting high on the bench looking down critically at her with his fishy, watery eyes. In them there was not a spark of compassion. He did not even interfere during the outrageous and scathing grilling that the prosecutor gave her during the cross-examination. Not a word of protest did he offer while she was being dragged through that mire of obnoxious and disgusting falsehood.

The idea of the prosecutor daring to ask her those preposterous and insulting questions! His effrontery was unbelievable. How he had cast from his large, ugly mouth those gross insinuations against her character, and how helpless she was to resent them! What could he have meant when he asked her if she had ever left her apartment alone in the evening? She would remember to her dying day the enraptured leer of triumph that came over his face when she admitted that she had frequently gone out alone. Where was his manhood that he could coldbloodedly put a defenceless and innocent woman on such a rack of torture? The whole crowd of them acted like a pack of wolves surrounding and trapping her.

Her own attorney behaved even worse than the others. Why had he not protected her against those birds of prey? Why did he sit supinely while malicious contumely was being hurled at her? It would have been easy for him to rise from his chair and put an end to the innuendoes so foully launched against her. He could have stopped those vulgar snickers from the spectators when she told the horrid tale of her married life—a tale that made her cheeks burn as if seared by fire. She remembered now that in her wild impulse to escape she had slipped away without even speaking to him.

And her husband! What a cad he had been through the proceedings! Her

blood boiled when she thought of him. How she loathed and despised him! And to think that she had once loved him as no other woman loved a man! He had stifled every gentle impulse in his headstrong determination to humiliate her. He had broken his deliberate pledge to her attorney that he would not contest her complaint for divorce. Where was his sense of decency? Of course, he had lost every virtue he ever possessed in the life of shame and abandon he was pursuing. And why had he not kept his word? To save himself a few paltry dollars of alimony!

How he had made her suffer! Yet she would have avoided separation. She would have made any sacrifice to have held her marital vows sacred. But he drove her to it. She could have excused him for his affair with the low Sinclair woman, with her broad, sensuous nose and her dry, straw-coloured hair. She would have humbled herself before his treachery and unfaithfulness. She would have surrendered him to that common, tawdry, vicious creature. But when he became conspicuous and promiscuous her finer sensibilities rebelled. She could not bear to have her disgrace and her betrayal flaunted to the world.

The taxicab stopped abruptly. She alighted and made her way to her apartment in a sort of trance. At last it was over. She was free. Her nerves became more quiet and her self-control returned in the peaceful and comforting atmosphere of her rooms. The future was before her. She could forget the past with all its bitter miseries and mental agonies. But what was she to do? The court had allowed her a hundred dollars a month alimony. She had remained long enough to hear the judge pronounce those words in his low, guttural voice. She could not live on that amount. It was so insignificant that she could not even dress on it.

She threw open the curtains of the windows and a brilliant light flooded the apartment. She would probably have to go to work. How she dreaded the thought of drudgery! She did not know typewriting or stenography. It would take her months to learn at some business college. She would perhaps be able to obtain employment as a clerk in a store, but the idea of being an ordinary shopgirl appalled her.

She walked across the room and sat down in front of the mirror at her dressing table. Her face was very pale. Yet the bloom of youth was still upon it. Her hair still hung gracefully over her forehead, and there was that dimple as pretty as ever. She began suddenly to rouge her cheeks, and a smile almost played on her lips.

Oh, yes, the future! She had decided what to do about that.

NO woman ever actually refuses a man; the most she ever does is to put him into cold storage for a while.

IF you like the present time, it is here. If you dislike it, it is going. What more can you ask?

AN AMERICAN

By Clarkson Crane

I

DURING that last winter of the war, when the fronts were like two frozen seas opposing one another with brittle lifted surf, I ran across, by a curious chance, Denham Blair, once a schoolmaster of mine, whom I had not seen for many years. Really, I had almost forgotten him; and his appearance (he passed by me—that was all) not only left me with vivid impressions of himself, which I shall try to set down, but filled me with memories of my dead boyhood. This is the way it happened:

I first heard him mentioned one afternoon when I returned from post. Entering the dark hovel where we lived (in times of peace it had been a stable) I saw the second sergeant in the doorway working away at a punching bag that swung before him on a cord, attached at one end to a rusty hook in the ceiling, at the other to a cleat in the floor. He was naked to the waist and looked very white against the darkness inside. Behind him against the opposite wall a high mirror stood, with a gilded frame, dimly reflective, which we had found long ago in the half-ruined house next door. His feet well apart in the mud, the sergeant kept looking over his shoulder into the glass, moving his arms vigorously and swelling his chest.

When I passed, he said, stopping a moment and breathing deeply:

"Hullo." Then: "Foreign Legion's in town."

I was too full of my surroundings to pay much attention to his words, though I had noticed khaki-coloured uniforms around the village. Anyway, his extreme activism always irritated me. It was a saturated day, with a gray sky over shabby stone and plaster walls, and I had left my ambulance quickly, knocking off the switch, thinking only of the stove ahead of me. Underfoot, the mud was pitted and greasy. And, crossing the road, I could see mist over there on the river. When a man's soul turns gray in such a world and he forgets even to desire, becoming formless and passive inside like a puddle of stagnant water, he is said to suffer from *cafard.*

That is the way I felt and the others looked, in there around the stove. Beyond them, in the darkest end of our dwelling, was a tiny yellowish oblong of oiled canvas, a sickly window.

I remember catching a glance of the sailor's gold teeth, as I walked in. He was sitting on the edge of a broken chair, as he sat hour after hour, his head bent forward, his knees separated, as if trying to surround the stove. And three or four others were lying on the bunks near-by doing nothing. While I was drawing off my gloves, Tommy said, destroying the silence:

"He came from around the bay."

The words drifted away like smoke, unconnected, uncalled for, as far as I could see; and the silence enveloped us again, rapidly, almost threateningly. Finally, when no one resumed the thread, I asked:

"Who came from around the bay?"

Tommy said, after a while, "Oh, a fellow," and let his head fall back against a roll of blankets.

But the sailor, pressing the end of a stick against the stove door (he meant to open it soon), answered, his head on one side:

"A fellow in the Foreign Legion, an American. He's quartered right next door, came in here this morning. When he knew"—clatter of the stove door—"we were from California"—crunch and crackle of new wood—"he said he came from around San Francisco."

I suppose my curiosity was a bit active because I had come so recently from the open air. At any rate, lying on my back among someone's blankets with my overcoat still around me, I kept turning the matter over rather sluggishly in my mind. The invigorated flames hummed beneath the metal casing of the stove. Finally, I asked:

"What else did he have to say?"

Silence. Then the sailor murmured:

"Oh, nothing much," and Tommy said:

"He's a nice-looking fellow."

That was all they knew, apparently; at least all they would say. I remember deciding that the former was the case: they had found out nothing more; and I felt vaguely surprised, and a little angry, as one will feel angry at trifles, living in a swamp of ennui. I felt sure that if I had found, in this way, an American, a "nice-looking fellow" in the Foreign Legion, I should have learned more about him.

"He may come in to-night," Tommy suggested.

But the sailor, who knew more than the others, said:

"No, he won't. He got picked for some detail or other. Getting barbwire or digging a trench or something. He won't be here till to-morrow."

Just then, in the dark end of the quarters, under the yellow window, the two men on kitchen police, walking around the long table that rested on saw horses, began dealing out tin plates like playing cards, tossing them quickly so that they spun clattering for a moment, and came to rest at length on the wooden surface, making a tiny, abrupt sound like a grunt. Then followed the gushing rattle of forks and spoons. This was called "setting the table."

II

I SAW him on the day after and recognized him.

All that morning, while I was pouring gasolene and oil into my car, and cleaning spark-plugs, I kept thinking of the soldiers who had spent a night or two in the adjoining house during the winter and passed on. They would come, infantry, artillery, trench-mortars; and we would see them about for a while, standing in the doorway or drawing water from an old well in the ransacked garden out behind. And soon they would vanish, departing at some dim hour of the morning, away into the black silence of the winter night.

Only those of us who slept lightly would hear them: murmured commands and shuffling in the snow; the jingle of a pack as a straggler trotted out to the alignment; then a word bringing quick, rigid silence; finally a melting away into sound and movement, stamping feet, words, laughter, clinking metal, going away, more and more remote . . .

When I entered the cantonment about noon, he was there, sitting before the stove on the chair which the sailor usually occupied. He had his arms on his knees and was leaning forward, holding a cap in his hands.

Drawing near, I saw one tanned, rather gaunt cheek above the yellowish, ill-fitting uniform, and one side of a drooping brown moustache. There was nothing familiar about the profile—nothing. I have wondered why that was so; doubtless because, in those days when I knew him, he always sat behind his desk, facing and slightly above us. And he had come gradually to assume that position in our minds almost symbolically.

He turned when I walked toward him, and I heard someone off to the side in a hurried voice commence an introduction. What light there was from outside came upon him, showing me his head, bald in a curious limited way that made his forehead seem very high. And the straight, delicate nose—I could not mistake that. I stopped.

"Mr. Blair," I said, instinctively.

He did not move, only looking up at me, blinking, his face reddened from the heat of the stove. It was evident he did not remember. Then, rising to his feet and letting his cap fall to the ground, he took a step toward me, peering into my face with his head forward; and a rapid glint seemed to pass across his eyes as of fear, swift and vanishing. He muttered:

"What! What!"

For an instant, while he stood there, I saw him in a flash as I used to know him, clean shaven, quiet, sitting there before us at his desk in the schoolroom, with the yellow sunlight entering through the window and lying in broken rays on the floor and the wide chair arms. When I told him my name, he sat down again, seeming relaxed all at once, looking at me again and again, and smiling in that sudden, timorous way of his. Then he said:

"Yes, yes, of course, of course," and turning to the others, "Isn't that strange?"

While I explained to them that Denham Blair had been my Latin teacher in a Berkeley school, he examined my face now and then, smiling thoughtfully; and when I had finished and the platitudes of surprise had come duly forth, he said, half laughing, with a side gesture of his arm:

"I used to teach him Latin Grammar." Then, as if wondering at something: "Latin Grammar."

"But when did you leave the school?"

His laugh faded, and he looked at me for a moment in silence.

"Not long after you did—a year or two. But don't you remember? Didn't you know?"

I said quickly: "No—what?" and then it all came back to me, the memory of Denham Blair, bearing with it tatters and fragments of vanished days, as if the man himself were running toward me through a sombre forest, covered with clinging bits from the foliage around him.

"Yes, I remember."

Long after I had left Berkeley, when my school days were retreating and standing out in brittle, coloured pictures, a letter had told me of the affair. My correspondent had written: "You should hear what the people say! It's screaming. And the men, too, as bad as the rest."

He had written something like that, and had added, "Really, I didn't know the old boy had it in him."

That sentence, of all the letter, remained complete in my mind, and, looking at Denham Blair as he sat there before the stove, preparing to roll a cigarette from the heavy tobacco of the soldiers, I wondered why he had always impressed us that way. Old boy! He couldn't have been more than thirty at the time.

When I read the letter long ago, I thought the matter natural enough, and felt repelled by the unsympathetic publicity which had rendered it sordid. Then, of course, there was Blair's position of a school teacher. But what business was it of theirs—all those smug people who had managed their own lives more adroitly? And as for the type of woman—well, that was his own business.

Holding the cigarette in both hands, he moistened the edge, smoothed down the paper, and placing it thoughtfully between his lips, struck a match against the stove, and raised the flame to the emerging, brown strands. When a glow ate away the white edge, he threw down the match and turned toward me, blowing out smoke. I said again:

"I remember."

And he nodded.

Just then the sailor entered in greasy overalls, a smudge of oil on his temple under the yellow hair. Saying "hullo" to Blair, he sat down on a box near-by, holding out his hands to the stove, and began to ask him about a machine-gun that he had just seen outside the house next door.

While Blair talked, with the cigarette before him so that the smoke climbed up beside his face, his left hand holding the cap for which he had groped, while

speaking, upon the floor, I watched him sitting there, and let my thoughts travel back to those days in California.

Looking at his roughened, tanned face, his uncut hair, the loose, discoloured uniform, I couldn't help smiling, making clear comparisons, remembering the white forehead I had known. But it was a smile tinged with a shadow of rapid wonder (or was it fear?), a feeling of humiliation before the swift forces that pluck a man up and toss him half-way around the world. Perhaps I should think of them as within Denham Blair, these forces, fusing into the private destiny that drove him on, unwinding in his pocket like a ball of string.

Anyway, forgetting the dead, gray moon outside, I almost felt the warmth of distant air, and saw the manifold, varied green of foliage dozing in the sun. It was Blair's high, bare forehead that returned most vividly to me. We used to call it a "dome" and make innumerable jokes about it, which seemed amusing at the time. I think that every class, as it came along, thought and said exactly the same things, probably without knowing it. But they made the hours pass, which was all-important, and we never were sure whether Blair even noticed our observations. He always was preoccupied.

One incident was still so real.

During a hot early afternoon, when the shades over the windows were pulled down and the light, coming through them, was yellow, we were lying back in our chairs, steeping in a soft lethargy, awaiting the end of the hour. No one could translate. No one wanted to. Even Blair was listless and absent-minded. But when boy after boy, drawing himself up in his chair, at the sound of his name, stammered irrelevant words, and then looked up dumbly, Blair's impatience grew in the heat, and his brow reddened. This blushing was one of the things about him that amused us so: we thought of his head as a thermometer filled with pinkish liquid; and, seeing it now, we began to glance at one another, bending closer to our books.

He sat there, opening and closing his lips, calling resignedly all the names. After each failure a little burst of laughter came; and soon there was a feeling in the room, as if the air were full of fine wires tightly drawn. Suddenly a fly, coming through the yellow, warm light, paused on his bald forehead. He brushed it away. It returned. He waved his hand once more angrily; and once more it came back. Laughter trickled along the line of chairs, shattering the tense air. Very red, Blair rose to his feet, and walking to the window, rolled up the shade quickly, and then jerked it down again. The fly still circled around his head. I don't know what would have happened if the buzzer hadn't sounded. There was a clattering of chairs and a rush for the door.

On another day, I don't know how long after, I entered his room with a paper in my hand, wishing to ask him a question. He was behind his desk, stooping over and tugging at a drawer; and he seemed so agitated that I stood for a moment in the doorway. He tugged and tugged. But it didn't open. And, at last, stamping his foot and raising his head, he began to shake and rattle the drawer, screwing up his mouth. There was such a strange, desperate look on his face that I withdrew softly, going away down the hall on tiptoe.

Those were the memories prominent in my mind.

I had not been listening to the conversation; but when my thoughts returned to the dark quarters, with the chill of winter outside, they were talking of battles in which Blair had taken part. I heard him say:

"I have been wounded twice."

Exclamations rippled around among them.

He nodded his head, repeating: "Yes, I have been wounded twice," and began to show them where.

During lunch, he sat beside me, saying very little. Once, when someone mentioned the end of the war, he said,

"Oh," quickly, shrugging his shoulders and tossing one hand into the air. But through all the meal, I felt that he was on the point of saying something to me, something that wouldn't come out; and I waited.

But he went away shortly after we had finished eating, walking out between the damp stone walls, and glancing at his reflection in the gilt framed mirror. He would come back, he told us, on the following day.

III

It was afternoon before he appeared, hesitating in the doorway and looking toward the stove. When we all urged him to come in, he walked forward slowly, and said, stopping before me:

"Don't you want to take a walk? I've been working on the company papers all morning. The records and accounts, you know."

The air was motionless when we stepped out on to the creased snow. Between the jagged walls of crushed houses we could see the rounded hills, looking like dead creatures covered up, and facing us, above the street, the village church of roughened gray stone, almost undamaged, standing against the sky. Walking down the slope toward the river, we looked out over the flat, white valley into the mist that hung there.

Until we reached the canal, which ran between two rows of trees about one hundred yards before we came to the river, Blair said nothing, only clearing his throat. We could hear a sullen grumble of cannon coming from another sector, and, as we turned to go north along a towpath, a brittle crust crackled beneath our feet.

Glancing toward the half-frozen, sluggish canal, he said:

"Did you tell them all about me?"

"No; just what I heard you say: that you had left Berkeley, were sick of teaching school. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. It doesn't make any difference. I just wondered. I don't care at all, you know."

I said: "Of course not."

And he faced me suddenly, his eyes flashing, and exclaimed:

"I don't. I don't. I don't care about anything. Not anything."

We walked in silence under the black trees, beside portly canal boats perpetually moored.

Finally, he said, his eyes roving along the ground:

"I've been saying that *I* went away, that *I* came to France, that *I* did this and that. It's all wrong. At least I think it's all wrong." He hesitated a moment. "Have you ever felt that you were riding along on destiny—like—like—well like a lost hat on a puff of wind?"

He did not wait for me to answer, adding hurriedly:

"I've had no one to talk to, no one, no one. It's been terrible. I keep thinking of so many things—no, that's not the way it was. It was more than myself, much more. Something outside me seemed to do it.

"You know," he laughed quietly, "everything seemed to come to a head at once. For a while I thought it unnecessary, all of it. I think it would have blown over, if something hadn't made me flare up and tell Cummings what I thought of him. You remember Cummings? Or was he made principal after you left? Well, he pulled away at the ends of his gray moustache and said: 'Very well, Mr. Blair; you have said quite enough!' The top of his head was bald and undulating. I seemed to hate that part of him more than anything else. Queer, isn't it, how one will feel? I never could understand how I work. Well, ten years came up through me when I talked to him."

He repeated, "Yes," and then chuckled, walking on without speaking.

The tow-path curved gently; and, far away across the river, we began to see, emerging from the mist, a line of poplars. Long, narrow bridges, at intervals, reached towards them.

"But what did you do then?" I asked.

"Oh, I felt free." He raised both arms and dropped them quickly to his

sides. "I thought, 'Now I'm out of it. I'm adrift.' And I wanted to go somewhere, far away, where I'd be different. I really thought I would be, you know. And so I hurried back to my room, threw a few things into a bag, and took a car for San Francisco. I hadn't yet any—any—oh, call it chagrin, conventionalized chagrin. I had some—afterwards. But then I just felt free, and life seemed very simple, as if I could do anything. I swore that I should never cross the bay again. Isn't it funny that I can still hear the rattle of the Key Route train during that ride—not other rides?"

He stopped talking, and walked along, silently, over the hard ground; but I said nothing, feeling sure that he would continue. The cannon grumbled up there to the north. He exclaimed:

"They're afraid of life, those people. They don't respect it. And what else is there for us to respect, if it isn't life and human passion? Why do we keep looking over our heads when we have all that?"

There were more quiet moments which only our footsteps on the breaking crust disturbed. He went on:

"Well, everything happened as I expected, and soon I went away by myself. I did a good many different things—just lived as I wanted to, whims—my own whims. I reached this—business, finally. It is not important how. I felt so free, I still do. Really, I wasn't lost like the hat on the puff of wind. I was going my own way. Shall we turn back?"

We halted near a heavy, submerged canal-boat, tilted on to its side, and stood without speaking, feeling the world all about steep silently in its moisture. Over the valley the mist was rising; we could see the line of poplars now more clearly.

Facing me abruptly, he asked:

"Do you love life? Do you want to live every day? I didn't once. I loathed it. And you hate it now. I can see. It's just a heavy stone for you, that you're pushing onward through a fog, without any reason, while idiots gibber all around in the dark. That's the way I felt long ago.

"Now I love life: I love the colour, the beat of it. I suppose—I suppose it's because I don't care. I—" he stopped, turning from me, with a low, apologetic laugh, and stared away toward the vague rounded hills, flattening down with his shoe a roughened mound of snow. Then, raising his head quickly:

"I haven't talked with any one for so long, really talked I mean. How could I? They wouldn't listen. They'd say: 'He talks too much about himself. What a bore he is!' But if they would only listen. You listen—You know, when I'm in a tight place, I can go right on, with a feeling of scorn for it all. I think scorn is the word. We'll call it that anyway—for want of a better one. But I've had the feeling often—as if—as if—nothing mattered."

He hesitated again, and then, smiling almost sheepishly, said, stammering a little:

"I—I sometimes think of it to myself, of life, I mean, as a warm shining ball, very fragile, that I hold in my hand. I toss it up into the air, away up, without caring much whether I catch it or not. And often I wonder if it wouldn't be better to throw it right down on to the ground, and—and let it go at that."

While we walked back to the village beside the dead waiting canal, he spoke very little, keeping his hands in his pockets, and kicking at particles of frozen snow. Once, as if half to himself, he muttered:

"You must go to the end of yourself. Do you know the French expression, *jusqu'au boutiste?* One who goes to the bitter end. That is what one must be. Sometimes I wonder where I am going."

I glanced at his calm, browned face with the thin drooping moustache, and the eyes, holding that dull smoulder in them. Yes, I suppose it was true. Blair *was* a *jusqu'au boutiste* in his way; but I wondered vaguely, feeling

that he had made a conquest of something, if he were not still uncertain, jealous of his victory.

We turned and climbed the soft road toward the church. Just before he vanished into his billet, he faced me once more, and said:

"I'll come in to-morrow. I have a friend I want to bring—a Pole."

IV

We were all around the stove when he came the next morning. The Pole, who followed him timidly, smiling repeatedly and laughing when anyone addressed him, was a short, thin man with a yellow moustache. I have forgotten his name. He spoke occasionally in broken French, with a soft, rolling accent, and seemed pleasantly surprised at anything he saw. Two or three times he asked, "You used to know him?" Then he would look admiringly at Blair out of his pale wet blue eyes.

"I can't wait, I can't wait," Blair told us nervously. "I must go with the sergeant after supplies—*ravitaillement*."

Then, drawing me aside, he said: "You see, he is the only one I talk to. And in French. It is not like speaking one's own language."

He went away then into the gray cold, looking behind over his shoulder and smiling. The little Pole followed at his heels.

In the doorway, Blair paused for a moment, and, leaning forward, examined his face in the tall mirror with the gilt frame. Then he seemed to snatch himself away.

That was the last time I saw him; for in the morning he was gone, his company having stolen away silently during the muffled, hollow night; and the house next door was vacant again and still. But I always kept that final picture in my mind: Denham Blair, in his baggy, yellowish uniform, standing with the creamy mud on his shoes, staring long at his own tanned face in the high glass.

V

Winter ended, and the immobility of the front broke up like ice in spring torrents. During that last, tumultuous March of the war, I often thought of Denham Blair, walking quietly, with his sombre face, among all that crowd, "thinking of many things." Where was he going, I always wondered, a man whom this America of ours, so dishevelled and unthinking, had cast forth with a mighty sweep of the arm to wander dazed over the earth?

Once I received a letter, a few scrawled lines. But he only wrote about the weather; and toward the end he tried to be humorous. I have forgotten what he said, but I know he tried to be humorous.

Then days poured down upon me, making the letter only a memory. It was two or three months later, on a hot, clear, midsummer day, while we were up in the Aisne, near Attichy, that the sailor told me:

"I saw some of the Foreign Legion back there," pointing to the hills across the river. "In the first village you come to on the road to Pierrefonds."

I found his company there a day or two later, quartered in a large courtyard with yellow manure piles and white plaster walls. The smoke from a round black rolling kitchen climbed into the blue sky. Soldiers in khaki-coloured uniforms were lazy all about us in the warmth.

I asked a tall Arab if he knew Blair, but the man shook his head; then while looking about me, suddenly I heard some one saying: "Oh! Ah! Ah!" in a small voice, and, turning, saw the little Pole, running toward me, his hands lifted. He stopped before me, panting, apparently unable to speak. But, looking at his face, I guessed what he couldn't say.

"He's dead?"

The small man nodded and then gripped my arm in both his hands.

"Yes, yes, yes. Oh, this cursed war! This cursed life! Why did he have to be killed? He was wonderful! Won-

derful!" He used the word *épatant, épatant!* "I never met a man like him."

I thought tears were coming from his eyes; but probably they were always watery like that.

He went on: "It was all unnecessary. He was killed far behind the lines, so far. It wasn't right. And only one shell came. It was during a relief. We were walking along a road far, far behind the trenches. He was near me. All at once, *rrrrowff*—a shell broke in the field about twenty metres away, just one shell. And he fell down. But only one shell!"

Releasing my arm, he repeated, "Just one shell," and said "*Rrrrowff!*" again, making a quick gesture with his hands. Then:

"Bah! They call that war when a man can be killed far behind the lines. He died right away, quietly."

There were men walking about us in the sunlight. The walls of the houses, usually dirty, seemed very white and warm.

I watched the Pole's thin face. He added:

"Quietly. He didn't say a word."

Quickly and quietly. Good enough. Yet, looking back, all the rest of it seemed such a waste of time. I wanted to shrug my shoulders and turn away. What *was* the use?

The Pole exclaimed suddenly: "He knew how to live, that man!"

We stood there in the sunlight looking at one another.

THE MATCH

By Louis Untermeyer

DO you recall our first few moments together,
Or do you forget?
You stammered and said something vague about the weather;
I offered a cigarette

And took one for myself; and there were snatches
Of laughter as you tried
To keep aflame those weak, half-hearted matches
That flickered and died.

Finally, with an effort, you succeeded;
And, shielding it with your hand,
You offered me the only spark I needed.
You did not understand

When, as I leaned to you and the flame leaped higher
And you would not let it go,
I warned you, laughing, you were playing with fire . . .
Now you know!

THE SEEKER OF A SECRET

By John Hanlon

THE SINGER

A STAR shone high in the evening sky;
Stars are too beautiful to die;
It has fallen.

A blood-red rose poured forth its breath;
Fragrant things should never know death;
It has faded.

Love and I on the pathway trod;
Love should endure as long as God;
It has ended.

THE SEEKER OF A SECRET

Who are you?

THE SINGER

A singer of sad songs.

THE SEEKER

But beyond that—? I know you sing, I know your songs are sad.

THE SINGER

I am a woman who has loved. That is my tragedy, my comedy—which, those who read my life may choose.

THE SEEKER

I am sorry—

THE SINGER

Sorrow avails nothing. Long ago I discovered that you could not make mortar out of tears to rebuild tall towers that had fallen into ruins. Now I sing instead of weeping. Listen!

Life is the thorn when the rose is dead,
Life is the laugh when eyes are sad,
Life is only the sister of death,
And death is the kinder.

THE SEEKER

Oh please don't sing such dreadful things! Don't be so unhappy!

THE SINGER

I must be unhappy; that is the only way I know that I am alive.

THE SEEKER

But why do you call yourself a woman who has loved and think that everything ends with that? Why, the world is filled with love. It may come to you again.

THE SINGER

Oh no. This is another of my songs and I know it is a true one.

Those who say love comes often, lie.
I who have seen it pass, should know
Flowers that once have blossomed die.

Can age-dry rivers ever flow?
Those who say love comes often, lie.
I who have seen it pass should know
Flowers that once have blossomed die.

THE SEEKER

Don't you do anything all day but sit here and sing?

THE SINGER

Yes. I sift my ashes.

THE SEEKER

Ashes? That great heap at your feet? But they're funny looking ashes, some of them are amethyst, and some are scarlet, and some gleam just like gold.

THE SINGER

They're not the sort of ashes you're thinking about; they're memories and dreams that never came true. I sift them to find some tiny trifle that the flames have spared. See, this is the first flower he ever gave me, a violet he found under the willows one April. And this is one of the little shoes of the baby that never was born.

THE SEEKER

But why do you throw them back among the ashes again? Could you not keep them?

THE SINGER

When I find them and my fingers touch them, they become scorched like all the others. Listen!

Beauty brings joy, light-hearted
As willows in the rain.
Alas, that hand in hand with joy,
Beauty brings pain.

There is a song that wakes a heart
Silent for many years;
But all old songs, no matter how gay,
Can fill the eyes with tears.

THE SEEKER

If I were you, I should close the door tightly upon the past. I should live for to-day.

THE SINGER

To-day means loneliness.

THE SEEKER

But to-morrow—

THE SINGER

To live for to-morrow one must dream. And dreaming is useless. I should only dream that some day he would come back again.

THE SEEKER

But he might—

THE SINGER

Once finis is written across a chapter, it can never reopen.

THE SEEKER

Is finis ever written?

THE SINGER

I listened to the song of a thrush,
Praying that it might never hush;
It is silent.

There were great gods in the long ago.
A god is too great to fall, I know;
Yet their twilight came.

Why should love, which is oh so frail,
Live where a thousand things must fail;—
And love is done?

NEARLY all the good epigrams start with "Love is—." Most of the best ones end with "Love was—."

FREEDOM

By Max Robin

I

TO tell you the truth, I liked my friend Bob Edwards, even more than he liked me, Jim Fitzpatrick. Don't get frightened at our names—to begin with. They were not ours. We assumed them because they were more easy to pronounce than our own and because they sounded more American.

I'll tell you why I liked my friend. Anybody would have liked him, and so will you—I suppose. He had a stiff, rugged character. He was a man with an iron will. He was what you call a human dynamo. And if he had fallen into proper hands his energy and inspiration would have been turned to good use.

As it was, he was my inspiration, as well as his own. There was not a trace of weakness in Bob's character. You would never see him yawn, worry, lie about idle or do anything of the kind. He was a live wire every minute of his life—restless and untiring. He had a great passion for creating or doing something.

I tramped with him all over North America. We were in Canada, Florida, New Mexico, Kentucky, Arizona—everywhere in this part of the continent. We had sailed the full length of the Mississippi. When we once came to New Orleans we had a mind of going into Mexico and South America, but changed our minds.

We went through a lot during those years. We did every kind of work imaginable under the sun. Our spirit lies scattered over the length and breath of those places we had passed. Everywhere we left something. For always we had in mind to do and live.

I don't know why we did all that. I don't know what great charm possessed us. I know only that we had a great thirst for doing things. Always something seemed to call us, and we went and laboured and left and worked again. There was no end. Our red blood boiled. Our young hearts throbbed with enthusiasm and we were busy living.

We had worked as lumberjacks, ice-breakers, miners, sailors, snow-shovellers, life-savers, stone-breakers, wood-choppers and blacksmiths. Always we picked the harder job, the one that was in the open and required muscle rather than brain. We belonged to nature. We were free men, and we wished to knock about as much as possible and do as many things as we pleased.

We once had a job smashing stones, which we did outside during winter under a temperature of sixteen below zero. A wind blew hard at our ears. The trees groaned over us. A cold sun stared down, and all around us the earth glared with frost. We were the only two to work that day. The rest of the gang had stayed home. But we came, and stuck through a day of nine and a half hours.

And do you know why we did it? Why, simply because we were healthy and loved life—because our bodies demanded it. We worked, and our faces smiled. Our hearts laughed. We had met the challenge of nature. We had met the challenge of men. And we had defied them all. We had beaten them all.

It was the song of our bodies, the song of clean, free, healthy men. We sweated, and the wind froze our sweat; but with the same enthusiasm, with the same joy we kept up, and when the time to quit came we felt that we had stood the task like men.

Once as we worked half-naked on board the *Madagascar* under a hot southern sun, all our muscles bent on the job, there started trouble between Bobby Edwards and a tall, fearless Irish sailor, whom many thought wise to avoid. Bobby came up to me smiling, his face burning with wrath, and said, "Watch now for a free show."

My heart was thrilled and I knew that something was coming and that it would be worth while. I saw Bobby come up and without uttering a word land a full right into the other's face. I saw the big Irishman go down like a log. I saw the eager expression on Bob's face. And together, Bob and I, felt the pride, the joy, the rough, all-surpassing majesty of youth.

Bob was impatient and quick. He did not like to be held too long at a task.

"Take it easy and be done with it," was what he used to say. But once in a fight I saw Bobby meet the resistance of his lifetime. It was between him and a plain short nigger. Bob had had no time to begin, when the other was over at his legs, and down went Bob toppling over the little man's body. He was up again in a fury. I had never seen him like that. It seemed he would crush his opponent. He darted forward, but quick as lightning the nigger dodged, turned somehow, and again had him on the floor. Bob was up again.

A group of sailors had formed. The black little devil, smiling, stood waiting for him. I saw Bob advance. But he no longer tried to strike. He seized the nigger in his hands, lifted him up in the air and threw him overboard. But his anger was not appeased. He left us, went to his bunk, and for fully fifteen minutes sat there, breathing hard and not saying a word to any of us. He had lost the fight. He frankly admitted that. But not for the life of him could he tell why.

Days and weeks would go by when we would be too lazy to work. We would sit near the seashore and watch the waves roll to us from afar. It would be quiet around, except for the palm trees murmuring and the vast ocean gasping and sighing and rolling incessantly. I'll tell you, it was good music for the ear, soft and soothing. It would recall to me the lines I had met somewhere:

"Sweet and low, sweet and low,
"Wind of the western sea . . ."

Well, Bob and I were in Miami, Florida. The place is one of the most enchanting in America, and we decided to stay there for a while. We had money, but preferred to live out of town. We bought some canvas, a tea-kettle, cups, a mandolin and some provisions, and in a day we were fixed in a regular tent.

That was a great month we spent then. There are no stories in life, I tell you. You do things, you live, and you don't even notice how you do it. You are too busy to look at yourself. But there in Miami, under those blue skies, in that balmy climate, life was story-like, as in a dream.

We were absolutely free men—strong and free. But it was a freedom which we well deserved. We had done our work—and now the vacation.

We would get up early in the morning, then lie for a while and talk. Next we would put on our bathing suits and run to the beach for a swim. You never tried it, so you don't know what it means. But I assure you that if you did it once in Miami you would never feel like leaving—but if you did, you would remember it for the rest of your life.

Bob and I were fine swimmers, and for fully an hour we would fight and struggle with the waves. Then, happy and smiling, we would run out to dry on the shore. After that we had breakfast near our tent. Through with that,

we dressed up and went to town. We visited the library, read eagerly from some books and magazines—for after all Bob and I were intelligent fellows, with a genuine thirst for knowledge—and went out, relieved and enlightened, for a walk through Miami.

I am sure that many people envied us as we strolled leisurely over the clean, beautiful streets. We went about and laughed. Any wonder? No worries, no cares, no responsibilities, no ties—young, free, happy, and gay. We had everything at our disposal. Indeed, life was too good, and invigorated by the air, fresh as the day itself, we walked about and cracked jokes and laughed and talked—all to our hearts' desire.

I suppose we were the two healthiest chaps in town, and we caught some of the girls' fancies. By two we were really infatuated, and we treated them daily to the movies. Bob had his and I mine. Poor girls! Foolish girls! They asked no questions. We were strangers to them, but our whereabouts did not concern them, and they entrusted themselves unprotectedly to us. But we were honest fellows and we never wronged them.

A kiss, a hug—well, that didn't matter. For as we stayed on we really began to love our girls. Mine was Florence, a pretty American blonde, and his Norma, a dark-haired little girl of Italian descent. We carried on wonderfully with them, for Miami is an ideal place for love, with eternal spring weather, natural gardens, clear skies, and balmy breezes from the big warm Atlantic.

Those girls turned to be an inspiration for us and we dreamt of them constantly. We would not speak to one another about our affairs, no. We just kept quiet. But each of us knew that the other was in love, and that filled our hearts with happiness.

Finally we felt that if we stayed a little longer we would have to marry them and stay there for good. It was not a bad place to live in, but we were not yet ready to settle down. Our hearts still carried us farther and farther away—and we were bound to go. But those girls, too, had got a fair hold on us, and we were in a dilemma. Nevertheless we stayed and loved and lived and laughed.

The afternoons around the seashore were glorious beyond description. We liked to take a canoe and go far out upon the ocean. It felt dandy to be rocked by the waves, just as the sun was setting and the sky was a living picture of yellow and blue. Later it would turn light-blue, and the whole city, with its distant swaying palms and white houses, would sink into the shadow—like a fantastic dream in fairy-land.

Bob and I would sit near our tent and eat. We always ate light things at night. Everything around us was so wholesome and clean, we too could not help keeping likewise. We would look into the dim space and think. Of a sudden our hearts and minds would get cleared and we would feel as light as birds in mid-air.

Bob would take out his pipe. He would smoke only on such solemn occasions. Sometimes he would leave me and disappear somewhere in the darkness, and I would sit and watch alone. He would come later with the girls, and together we would sit till midnight, only laughing, only joking. The only time we felt sad was when Bob began to play on his mandolin. We would all sit breathless, gazing into the impenetrable space.

As I think of those nights, Bob's music, our wonderful girls, a great longing fills my heart. I feel like going back there, but that I know is impossible.

And it was Bob who brought a sudden end to it all. It happened on a particularly magnificent afternoon, as we lay in our usual way near the sea.

Bob had been quiet for quite a while. He had his back turned to me, and I was watching his powerful muscular body lying motionless and inert. I remember he was dressed in a blue shirt, gray trousers and tan slippers.

"Say, Jim," he said, suddenly, lifting

only his head, "what would you think of leaving this place?"

"What for?" I asked.

"Well, it's no use idling around here. Don't you think we had better be doing something?" He turned with his face toward me as he said this. "Why, there are lots of things we could do in the world, and now is the time. We are killing time here and may be sorry for it later."

His face bore an undecided expression, and it seemed he was still weighing the matter over in his mind.

To tell the truth, I had expected some such say-out from Bob. For several days previous to that I had seen him go around in a way suggesting to me that he was dissatisfied with something. And now that he had spoken, I felt that he was right, but was afraid to admit it even to myself.

"You are talking nonsense," I rejoined after a brief pause. "What is it that you have suddenly found to do? You are still fooling yourself. You still believe that there and not here lies your happiness. I have learned this much, Bob, that the world is in its old place and nothing on earth has changed."

"Yes, but I have changed," he retorted slowly. "You do not require the world to change. You grow, and then everything changes in your eyes. And now I think that we have had about enough of this life. You know, too much freedom is no good. You have got to give something in return for it. And we have given nothing so far. I doubt if we can afford to continue like this. People are working. Big things are happening. There is work for all of us, and we have no right to bum. We must take part in this big game and do something that is really visible and constructive."

"Well, I see that you have begun to worry about society," I said.

"Maybe, Jim," Bob replied.

"But how long do you expect to last?" I asked. "I know that you are here because you have revolted against that common every-day life at which you must make good and stick. And we have made a pretty fair exchange. Don't forget that there is nothing more important, nothing greater or more sublime in life than the irrepressible clean cravings of your soul, and to go back means to crush those cravings and everything else you hold dear."

Bob sat up.

"Yes, I know all this," he said impatiently, "but you must force yourself to do it. People have made greater sacrifices. I have not turned altruistic all of a sudden. I realize only that you have got to do a good day's work before you can be a poet and call yourself free. We are too good to do nothing —that's plain. We will work with a definite aim in mind, and then feel that we have a right and a cause for which to live. Sooner or later a man comes to think that way, and I think it better for us to do it right now."

Bob won the argument. We had chosen the open road because our thoughts flew high and we considered ourselves free men. We had looked upon great men and them we envied, but because there was no way for us to beat them, we had given up. But now we were coming back. We stopped thinking about those men on top. Every man can do his share and feel proud of himself. Every man can control his emotions and tell his poetic soul to wait till he is through with his job. It is easy. It only pays to try. And the real man succeeds and is never sorry.

II

It was a short time ago that I spoke to my friend Bob about this come-back. He smiled, but I am sure that his blood boiled. His face expressed challenge and defiance.

"Energy might be turned into various channels of usefulness," he said; "anything you do is better than doing nothing. I dare any man to be in my way. One of these days I am going to fight Dempsey."

We both laughed. That old daring free spirit was still throbbing in our veins.

But now it is spring again, and I doubt whether we shall be able to withstand the mighty call of the great open road. It is good to be busy. We are working over fifteen hours a day—and we are happy. But the road is calling. Our bodies have suddenly awakened to a million irrepressible desires. The love for adventure is here again. A soul that has once known freedom will never stay enslaved. And with these fresh breezes blowing from those far-away naked hills that we once climbed, from those distant never-ending plains and fields, from those singing rivers and ever-roaring seas, we shall not hold out very long. Some day, and very soon too, we shall put on our old clothes and with a song of joy start out on the old trail. We are sorry to lose even one moonlit night, one day of bright yellow sunshine. To dream and write about it is not enough. We have got to go and live.

SENTIMENTALE

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

LIKE a suspended chord, the lilac sky
Haunts with a faintly sentimental tune
These aisles of twilight, where the shadows lie
Unbroken of the meditative moon.
Tempo rubato! The remembered song
Dies out among the stars, and I recall
The pulse-beat in her lifted throat, the long,
Low peal of lyric laughter ending all!

Moon of my troubled night, lest I should sleep
And touch the keys to this unfinished theme—
Lest I should sleep, and traitorously dream—
Strike from my heart this music! Let me keep
Only the golden words her gay lips flung
Into the hush that holds them now, unsung!

IT takes two to make a marriage. One is a girl who knows what she is about. The other is a mother who knows how to coach her.

LE PRÉCIEUX FARDEAU

By Florian-Parmentier

PAUL GERBEAU aimait mystifier ses amis. Ses amis, le sachant, ne s'y laissaient plus prendre. Mais, comme c'était un excellent homme, plus maniaque en somme que rusé, ils jouaient quelquefois les dupes pour lui faire plaisir.

Cet été-là, Gerbeau passait ses vacances dans les Vosges avec Fouquet, un ancien camarade de régiment, et Davel, un vieil ami de collège. Les trois compagnons avaient choisi, comme centre de leurs opérations, Gérardmer. De là, ils se proposaient de rayonner, d'un côté, sur tout le pays qu'arrose la Vologne, de l'autre, sur la vallée de Munster.

Le lendemain même de leur arrivée fut consacré à une ascension sur la Schlucht.

Aujourd'hui, comme chacun sait, les ascensions se font commodément assis dans un tramway funiculaire. Nos touristes prirent donc le tramway, non sans s'être, au préalable, attaché chacun un sac dans le dos, pour se donner "de l'allure."

Sur le parcours, les sites pittoresques, les torrents, les cascades ne manquaient pas; en sorte qu'ils arrivèrent sans ennui au bout du voyage.

Ils prirent le parti, parvenus à peu près au sommet, de suivre à pied la route de la Schlucht jusqu'au relai de la diligence, afin de jouir du splendide panorama qui se déroule sur la vallée des lacs de Longemer et de Retournemer.

En passant sous la Roche du Diable, Fouquet et Davel remarquèrent que Gerbeau détachait un fragment du rocher et le mettait dans sa poche.

—Ce sera un souvenir, dit-il. Je collerai, sur cette pierre, une étiquette avec la provenance et la date.

Ses compagnons firent un geste d'indifférence et reprirent leur marche. Gerbeau continua:

—J'ai des pierres de tous les pays par lesquels je suis passé. Aussi, je me flatte d'avoir d'assez appréciables connaissances en lithologie. J'ai du silex, du basalte, de l'ardoise, du feldspath, du spath, du porphyre, différentes sortes de marbre, des stalagmites, des galets, des fossiles. . . . J'ai même un aérolithe!

—Alors, tu collectionnes, fit Fouquet.

—Eh oui, comme tu vois.

—C'est un idée intéressante, assura Davel. Et ton aréolithe, s'il est authentique. . . .

—Tout ce qu'il y a de plus authentique, mon cher. Je l'ai vu tomber à mes pieds!

L'effet fut foudroyant, car Fouquet et Davel, à leur tour, laissèrent tomber . . . la conversation.

Le soleil commençait à devenir ardent. Les voyageurs furent heureux de prendre place dans l'omnibus. Ils arrivèrent ainsi, après avoir passé près des sources de la Meurthe, à un hôtel à cheval sur la frontière,—comme les gendarmes allmands sur la consigne.

Après un bon repas, ils reprirent leur route, pour se rendre au Hoheneck,—à 1365 mètres d'altitude! Le pays devenait de plus en plus pittoresque. Ils avaient maintenant de profonds ravins à leur droite, des cimes escarpées à leur gauche.

Au tunnel de Munster,—une énorme roche perforée, comme la Roche du

Diable,—Gerbeau voulut encore emporter un morceau du granit.

—Il faudrait les étiqueter tout de suite, pour ne pas le confondre plus tard, fit remarquer Fouquet, qui souriait dans sa barbe.

Le collectionneur marqua, en effet, ses pierres de traits de crayon.

—Vous devriez faire comme moi, dit-il à ses amis. Si vous saviez avec quel plaisir on se rappelle les étapes de ses voyages en regardant ces simples cailloux.

—Les cailloux du Petit Poucet, observa Davel.

—J'aime mieux me les rappeler à l'aide de cartes postales, répondit Fouquet.

—Pour moi, reprit Davel, je ne m'embarrasserais de souvenirs qui *pèsent* à ce point que si je trouvais quelque chose de rare . . . un aréolithe par exemple ou du pétunzé.

—Du pétunzé? Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? interrogea Gerbeau.

—C'est une pierre extrêmement rare, et fort recherchée des potiers d'art, parce que, travaillée, elle imite à s'y méprendre la porcelaine de Chine. Il n'est d'ailleurs pas absolument impossible d'en encontrer ici, car le peu que nous avons en France se trouve précisément dans les Vosges.

—Diantre! fit Gerbeau, tu es calé, toi!

—Oui, mon cher; mais je ne m'en vante pas.

On arrivait à l'endroit où il faut quitter la route de Munster et choisir soit le sentier français, soit la route carrossable alsacienne.

—Qu'en dites-vous, mes amis? demanda Gerbeau. Le sentier? la route?

—Le sentier! dirent ensemble Fouquet et Davel.

On s'engagea donc, par un étroit chemin rocailleux, à travers des éventrements de roche et de brusques ressauts de terrain. La chaleur êtait de plus en plus torride. Les trois voyageurs marchaient silencieusement, en écoutant se répercuter l'appel plaintif des pâtres dans la montagne.

Tout à coup, Davel, qui marchait en avant, s'arrêta en poussant des cris de joie.

Gerbeau et Fouquet s'étaient approchés.

—De pétunzé! leur dit-il, en montrant une sorte de granit léprosé de large taches blanches. Du pétunzé!

—Tu es sûr? demanda Gerbeau.

—Sûr et *certain* répondit-il d'un air aussi ravi que s'il venait de découvrir un trésor.

Et, débouclant les épaulières de son sac, il prit un solide couteau et se mit à gratter la terre, pour déterrer l'une des moraines. Presque aussitôt Fouquet l'imita, avec une ardeur qui surprit un peu Gerbeau.

—Mais, enfin, me direz-vous ce que vous avez l'intention de faire de cette pierre?

—Pas de la mettre uans ta collection, bien sûr! gouailla Fouquet.

—Tu n'as pas l'air de te douter, fit Davel en haussant les épaules, qu'un bloc de pétunzé comme celui que je vais mettre dans mon sac peut se vendre deux ou trois cents francs!

—Deux ou trois cents francs! Fichtre! s'écria Gerbeau.

Et il se mit à gratter le sol à son tour.

Quand les trois amis se furent chargés chacun d'un gros morceau de roche, ils reprirent leur route d'un pas moins assuré, baissant l'echine sous les traits implacables d'un soleil incandescent.

Il y avait à peine dix minutes qu'ils marchient de la sorte que Gerbeau, ruisselant de sueur, s'arrêtait pour s'éponger le front.

—C'est égal, dit-il; je n'aurai pas volé mes trois cents francs, quand j'arriverai à l'hôtel!

—Tu y penses déjà? fit Davel. Tu n'es pas au bout de tes peines, alors.

Arrivés à l'écho d'Auslicht, nos voyageurs regagnèrent, par les Trois-Chaumes, la route carrossable, afin d'atteindre plus aisément la cime du Hoheneck avec leur fardeau.

La chaleur leur paraissait devenue

tropicale, lestés comme ils l'étaient à présent. Gerbeau, qui avait un commencement d'asthme, souffrait beaucoup plus encore que ses compagnons. Et il répétait sans cesse, en soufflant bruyamment :

—C'est égal, j'ai déjà gagné mes trois cents francs !

Une fois, il ajouta, avec un regard d'admiration pour chacun de ses deux amis :

—Mais, ma parole, on dirait que plus vous avancez, moins vous êtes fatigués, vous autres !

—Dame ! c'est l'entraînement, répondit Fouquet.

Depuis quelque temps, Gerbeau songeait à se débarrasser de sa charge ; mais il n'osait exprimer son idée tout haut.

A quelques centaines de mètres du sommet, il se décida à consulter Davel.

—Comme tu voudras, lui dit celui-ci. Mais nous voilà presque arrivés. Pour redescendre, tu seras poussé par ton sac, et tu n'en mancheras que plus vite.

Parvenus enfin au haut du Hoheneck, Fouquet et Davel se mirent à consulter la table d'orientation pour reconnaître les points qu'ils apercevaient dans le recul de l'horizon.

Mais Gerbeau avait hâte d'entrer à la buvette et de se désaltérer. Il était en nage. Il était fourbu. La perspective d'une bonne heure de répit devant un large bock le séduisait davantage, en ce moment, que tous les panoramas du monde.

Quand il eut pris assez de repos pour se sentir la force de penser, il fut soudain visité par une idée qui le fit sourire.

Les trois touristes avaient déposé leurs bagages contre la paroi de planches, à l'extérieur de la buvette. Gerbeau sortit, ouvrit son sac, en tira le bloc de pierre, et déboucla le sac de Fouquet, dans l'intention de le charger d'un double fardeau. Mais il ne fut pas peu surpris en trouvant ce sac vide. Il ouvrit alors celui de Davel et le trouva vide également.

—Nous sommes volés ! s'écria-t-il, en rentrant précipitamment dans la buvette.

—Volés ? firent ses amis, qui avaient compris.

—Mais oui : nous avons laissé nos sacs dehors, et le pétunzé, le précieux pétunzé n'y est plus.

Fouquet éclata de rire.

Mais Davel, imperturbable, demanda :

—Tu n'as plus le tien ?

—Mais si.

—Ah ! . . . C'est que, vois-tu, j'allais te donner le conseil de ne pas trop t'en désoler. Fouquet et moi, nous nous sommes dit depuis longtemps que nous n'étions pas au Japon, et que, décidément, cette pierre ne pouvait être du pétunzé ! . . .

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Mary Pitcairn

Among novelties for evening wear, the reversible wraps are certainly going to prove themselves an undoubted success. It is such a charming idea to be able to start out for the evening in a wrap of black satin, and then, on arriving in one's box at the theatre, to face the bright lights in an exquisite confection of all shot rosy velvet and embroideries of silver stars. One can ring the changes unendingly this way with but a minimum of expenditure as compared with the other idea of the moment, which ordains a separate cloak designed to accompany each evening gown! Another reversible model seen recently was a combination of rich night blue satin and velvet brocaded in giant gold rings, and was capable of transformation into a wrap of lilac green velvet strapped with gold braids, whilst an even more enviable affair was of kolinsky-dyed squirrel on the one side and tailless ermine on the other.

A new fur, that is yet one of the very oldest of furs, has made its appearance recently. It is, as a matter of fact, nothing more than clipped sheep, and deigns to retain its name, though pronounced—for Fashion's sake—as "mouton." It is most liked for linings purposes, and as such was quite effective in conjunction with the slip-over-the-head coat of a velours cloth costume of dull turquoise blue heavily embroidered in chenille. This method of putting on the coat displayed the soft whiteness of the clipped mouton lining, which was extended to form the collar and diminutive cuffs. Astrakan has also taken on a new popularity as trimming for coats and skirts, and lends itself well to the Russian type of cap that is having something of a revival.

Hats which are inclined to turn right back from the face are a distinct note of winter millinery, and one much more generally becoming than might be expected. Great care has to be exercised, however, in selecting this type of hat, especially with regard to the profile view when lack of consideration for a nose pronouncedly hooked or one of the true Pekinese proportions may mar the whole "line." Large and small shapes are equally addicted to this upward tendency, the almost inevitable hardness of effect being broken occasionally by the still much favoured paradise plume. More usually, outstanding wings of jet are employed, while one of the most successful models followed Toreador lines, and huge flat bows of ciré ribbon, placed well over the right ear, broke the severe contour of the brim above, as well as sweeping below almost to the shoulder.

OWING TO A TEMPORARY SHORTAGE OF PAPER, TWO PAGES HAVE UNAVOIDABLY BEEN CUT OUT IN THIS NUMBER.

ABOUT RESTAURANTS

The Indian Restaurant, of 9, Leicester Place, Leicester Square, with its excellent cuisine and silent, attentive waiters, is a veritable home from home for Indians and Anglo-Indians either living or staying in London.

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Some Old-Fashioned Beauty Recipes

Simple and Effective

BY

MIMOSA

The Magnetism of Beautiful Hair

BEAUTIFUL hair adds immensely to the personal magnetism of both men and women. Actresses and smart women are ever on the lookout for any harmless thing that will increase the natural beauty of their hair. The latest method is to use pure stallax as a shampoo on account of the peculiarly glossy, fluffy, and wavy effect which it leaves. As stallax has never been used much for this purpose it comes to the chemist only in ¼-lb. sealed original packages, enough for twenty-five or thirty shampoos. A teaspoonful of the fragrant stallax granules, dissolved in a cup of hot water, is more than sufficient for each shampoo. It is very beneficial and stimulating to the hair, apart from its beautifying effect.

Permanently Removing Superfluous Hair

HOW to permanently, not merely temporarily, remove a downy growth of disfiguring superfluous hair, is what many women wish to know. It is a pity that it is not more generally known that pure powdered pheminol, obtainable from the chemist's, may be used for this purpose. It is applied directly to the objectionable hair. The recommended treatment not only instantly removes the hair, leaving no trace, but is designed also to kill the roots completely.

Don't Have Grey Hair

GREY hair is often a serious handicap to both men and women while still in the prime of life. Hair dyes are not advisable because they are always obvious, inconvenient, and often downright injurious. Few people know that a very simple formula, which is easily made up at home, will turn the hair back to a natural colour in a perfectly harmless manner. You have only to get two ounces of tammalite concentrate from your chemist and mix it with three ounces of bay rum to prove this. Apply this simple and harmless lotion for a few nights to the hair with a small sponge and the greyness will gradually disappear. The lotion is neither sticky nor greasy, and has been proved over and over again for generations past by those in possession of the formula.

To Have Smooth, White Skin, Free From Blemish

DOES your skin chap or roughen easily, or become unduly red or blotchy? Let me tell you a quick and easy way to overcome the trouble and keep your complexion beautifully white, smooth, and soft. Just get some ordinary mercolized wax at the chemist's and use a little before retiring as you would use cold cream. The wax, through some peculiar action, flecks off the rough, discoloured, or blemished skin. The worn-out cuticle comes off just like dandruff on a diseased scalp, only in almost invisible particles. Mercolized wax simply hastens Nature's work, which is the rational and proper way to attain a perfect complexion, so much sought after, but very seldom seen. The process is perfectly simple and quite harmless.

Blackheads Fly Away

A PRACTICALLY instantaneous remedy for blackheads, greasy skins, and enlarged pores, recently discovered, is now coming into general use in the boudoir. It is very simple, harmless, and pleasant. Drop a stymol tablet, obtained at the chemist's, in a tumbler full of hot water. After the effervescence has subsided bathe the face in the liquid, using a small sponge or soft cloth. In a few minutes dry the face, and the offensive blackheads will come right off on the towel. Also the large oily pores immediately close up and efface themselves naturally. The greasiness disappears, and the skin is left smooth, soft, and cool. This simple treatment is then repeated a few times at intervals of four or five days to ensure the permanence of the result.

portant—is situated in the heart of London, being only a minute's walk from Leicester Square Tube Station. Delightful little dinners (all Oriental dishes) are easily arranged on the English style, one of which was in progress when I last visited the restaurant. Every dish is prepared with Indian Massala, for which the restaurant is justly famous.

Sherry's, Middle Street, Brighton, are having a very fine season. The town has been, and is still, full of visitors, and hundreds sit down to lunch and dinner every day. The charabancs bring down an endless number to the town, and all seem to gravitate towards Sherry's. With the renewed interest in dancing, the coming winter should prove a record one.

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